Gov't budget deficit projected to reach ₱210 billion

Story on PAGE B1

MMDA + DPWH = BF?

KAYA KO 'TO!
DPWH
MMDA

By C. V. Esguerra

INSTEAD of one post or the other for the enemy of illegal vendors, why not both?

Bayani Fernando, chair of the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) and President Macapagal-Arroyo's

MMDA/ A18

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Iraq war suspense to last 3 more weeks

BAGHDAD—Six weeks into an intensive search for Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction, uncertainty is still the name of the game.

Iraq maintains it has no prohibited weapons, but the United States insists it does and is pressing ahead with a massive military buildup in the Gulf in preparation for war. The United Nations has

IRAQ/ A4

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph Monday, January 6, 2003 ★ 48 pages / 3 sections / vol. 18 / no. 29 P15 website: www.inq7.net

Braganza expected to replace Bunye

Press chief to become the President's spokesperson

By Carlito Pablo

NEW year, new dance in the Cabinet.

Well placed sources told the INQUIRER that the following changes in the Malacañang landscape would soon be announced:

Agrarian Reform Secretary Hernani Braganza will replace Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye.

Rigoberto Tiglao will give up his function as spokesperson for President Macapagal-Arroyo and will concentrate on his recent assignment as her chief of staff.

Bunye will take over as the President's spokesperson, and Braganza will in turn be replaced by one of his subordinates at the Department of Agrarian Reform.

And contrary to rumor, Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo will stay on as "Little President." Sources said Ms Macapagal had personally assured Romulo that he would remain first among equals in the Cabinet that has seen major changes since November.

Expectedly, however, Bunye neither confirmed nor denied that more changes were forthcoming in the President's official family.

"We have been repeatedly asked about an impending revamp. Sorry but we already have too much speculation and we do not wish to add to it," Bunye said in a prepared statement.

But a source said of Tiglao: "The Office of the Chief of Staff needs to be built up so the administration can accelerate its reform program for the next 18 months. It will need a full-time head."

Romulo and his wife Lovely left for the United States on Dec. 26 to visit their Washington-based daughter Guadalupe. He was due to return last night and was

BRAGANZA/ A18

TIGLAO: To work full time as the President's chief of staff.

BUNYE: To take over Tiglao's post as spokesperson.

BRAGANZA: To take over Bunye's post as press secretary.

Time to bite bullet with GMA not running

By Amando Doronila

ANALYSIS

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo is reinventing the concept of the First 100 Days—the traditional "honeymoon period" of the Philippine, as well as the American, presidency—by tucking it at the tail end of her administration.

By renouncing her ambition to run for the presidency in her own right in 2004, Ms Macapagal is seeking a renewal to achieve what she has failed to do in the past two years and to cram her crash programs into the next 18 months.

Her announcement on Dec. 30 that she is standing down in 2004 has thrown the windows wide open, allowing the fresh winds of hope to drive out the toxic effusions of the divisive and bitter politics of the past two years.

Because of the turbulence and the vicious atmosphere in which she took power from ousted President Joseph Estrada in January 2001, Ms Macapagal was denied the traditional euphoria, the honeymoon, that had been enjoyed by every President since the time of the transitional Philippine Commonwealth.

She entered the presidency under siege and a few months later was shaken by a rebellion of Estrada's resentful and unforgiving adherents. This set of circumstances, together with her unconventional, non-electoral method of accession, effectively denied her a honeymoon period during which she could have launched initiatives for economic reconstruction and political reform. With nearly half of the nation questioning the legitimacy of her accession—through people power rather than through elections—the President and her administration inaugurated an era of relentless guerrilla warfare in Philippine politics.

TIME/ A4

US troops arriving this month for exercises

By Julie S. Alipala
PDI Mindanao Bureau

ZAMBOANGA CITY—The US government's massive military buildup in the Middle East, in preparation for a likely war with Iraq, will not affect the antiterrorism training that American soldiers will conduct for Filipino soldiers here next month.

The highest-ranking Armed Forces officer in Mindanao, Southern Command chief Lt. Gen. Narciso Abaya, told the INQUIRER that the training program would go on as scheduled.

"There is no postponement," Abaya said.

Abaya said the training exercises, which he said would cost the US military about $30 million, would involve two Light Reaction Companies, four Light Infantry Battalions and a number of Air Force helicopter pilots.

He said US troops conducting the training would number 200 to 300 and would include servicemen from the Green Berets, the US Navy and the US Army.

The US soldiers start arriving this month, but Abaya did not give particular dates.

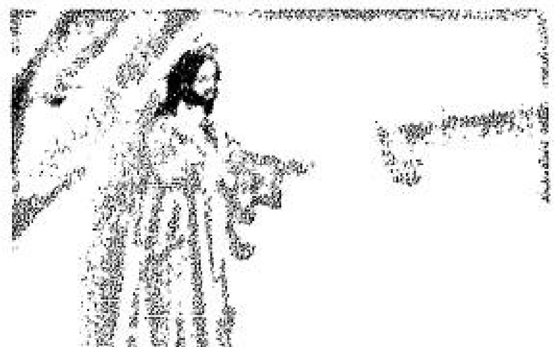
"They will not come in full force; only those required to train (for) a given module (will be here). After the training they will leave and another batch of trainors will arrive for another set of modules," he said.

Abaya also said there would be a change of site for the training exercises.

"Maybe Camp Enrile in Barangay Malagutay will be (used) for classroom type of training but for the actual training, we are going to use the inner Ecozone property in Barangay San Ramon," Abaya said, referring to sites in this city.

Last year's controversial Balikatan 02-1 training exercises were conducted in Abu Sayyaf-infiltrated parts of Basilan Island and in this city. The Basilan training was the first time joint RP-US military exercises were held in combat areas.

'More spiritual' Manong Ernie seeking merit points from God



TRADITIONAL politician Ernesto Maceda turns into a religious leader as he leads the sick to the Mother Ignacia Healing Center in Bagumbong, Caloocan City. JOAN BONDOC

By Volt Contreras

ERNESTO Maceda has assumed many titles of power. As his Christmas placards and streamers suggest, he is fondest of two: Senate President and Ambassador to the United States.

But is the public ready to recognize him, as he now considers retirement at 67, "at the endgame of my mortality," as an "Ambassador of God"?

This, Maceda said, is the title bestowed upon him by Sr. Gloria Ross, the healer-nun who recently made headlines for administering a "miracle bath" on disgraced ex-President Joseph Estrada.

"Sister Glo" of the Mother Ignacia Healing Center, Maceda said, has openly referred to him in gatherings as "Ambassador of God," mainly for having arranged Estrada's "bath" and President Macapagal-Arroyo's pray-over.

"I think I am now being used as an instrument of the Lord," Maceda told the INQUIRER at the MIHC compound in Barangay Bagumbong, Caloocan City. "This is a sort of a new assignment for me and I'm enjoying it."

Maceda has been a fixture in the country's not-so-godly political scene, from the Marcos years when he served as executive secretary, to the second Macapagal era, during which he said he had been offered a Cabinet position which he turned down.

In between, he was elected to three terms as senator, served as Senate President from 1996 to 1998, and was appointed ambassador to Washington by the abbreviated Estrada administration.

Following Estrada's ouster, he was among those charged as a conspirator in connection with the Labor Day 2001 assault on Malacañang by the deposed President's loyalists. The charge was dismissed two months later.

MORE/ A18

CEBU WEDDING SPONSOR JERRY CARUAL/PCPO-MALACAÑANG

President Macapagal congratulates newlyweds Jerald Mark Garcia, son of former Cebu City Mayor Alvin Garcia and grandson of Gov. Pablo Garcia, and Cristina Marie Wagner. The President was one of the sponsors of the couple's wedding at the Cebu Metropolitan Cathedral. ***(Story on Page A5.)***

40% of US nuns abused, says poll

WASHINGTON—As many as 40 percent of nuns in the United States have been sexually abused, often by a priest or another nun, according to an independent study detailed Sunday in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch newspaper.

The report comes at a sensitive time for the US Roman Catholic Church, which is still reeling from a year-long sex abuse scandal involving priests and children.

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported that the national survey of Catholic nuns was completed in 1996 but kept under wraps because some Catholic officials feared that the information would create a scandal.

The survey was conducted by researchers at St. Louis University and paid for in part by several orders of Catholic nuns, the newspaper reported.

The findings show that some 34,000 nuns across the United States may have suffered some form of sexual abuse. Many of the nuns said that after their abuse they were left with feelings of anger, shame, anxiety and de-

40%/ A18

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao including Palawan will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/01/06/02

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legaspi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

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Second FRONT PAGE

OFWs flee Ivory Coast war

Some Filipinas forced to work in nightclubs

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE PHILIPPINES has evacuated 24 Filipino workers from the strife-torn Ivory Coast in West Africa, Foreign Secretary Blas Ople said yesterday.

The group included women who were duped by illegal recruiters into working as bar girls without any salaries for the past year, Ople said.

There are an estimated 50 more Filipinos working in Ivory Coast who have yet to be evacuated, he said.

The 24 arrived at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport at about 11 p.m. on Friday after a gruelling 20-hour journey from the Ivory Coast administrative center of Abidjan.

Some of them had ended up working in nightclubs.

The group took a commercial flight from Ivory Coast, and transferred to a Cathay Pacific Airways plane when they reached Hong Kong en route to Manila.

They were accompanied by Edward Yulo, the vice consul at the Philippine embassy in Abuja, Nigeria.

Foreign Affairs officials led by Undersecretary for Migrant Affairs Jose Brillantes welcomed the group at Naia.

Some 50 workers in Abidjan and at least four Filipinos in San Pedro, about eight hours away from Abidjan, are being readied for immediate repatriation, Ople said.

Ople had ordered the repatriation of the Filipino workers amid the worsening situation in Ivory Coast, or Cote d' Ivoire.

The former French colony in the western coast of Africa is in the thick of a civil war led by rebels from the Muslim north opposing the rule of President Laurent Gbagbo.

The Filipino workers who were illegally recruited opted to be brought home "not only to escape the ongoing civil war but also because of the onerous conditions of their employment," he said.

CARRIED OFF BY THE MAGI

A young boy cries in the arms of one of the Three Kings at yesterday's celebration of the feast on T.M. Kalaw Street in Manila.

ERIK ARAZAS

Suspect names killer of RP nun in Yemen

SANAA, Yemen—The alleged killer of three American missionaries in Yemen has confessed that both he and the suspected assassin of a prominent socialist politician had links with a man who murdered three foreign nuns—one of them a Filipina—in the country in 1998, a source close to the investigation said.

"Abed Abdulrazzak al-Kamel confessed that he and Ali al-Jarallah had links with Abdullah Ali Nasheri," who assassinated the nuns in Hodeida, western Yemen, in July 1998, the source told AFP, requesting anonymity.

Nasheri, described by police at the time of the murder as a psychiatric patient, shot and killed in 1998 Sisters Tilia and Anetta of India and Sister Michael of the Philippines at the Dar es-Salam hospital in Hodeida where they worked.

The three slain nuns belonged to Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity.

Kamel fatally shot the three US missionaries at Jibla Baptist Hospital in southern Yemen on Monday and wounded a fourth. *AFP*

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MILF negotiator shot dead

DAVAO CITY—A peace negotiator for the Moro Islamic Liberation Front was shot dead on Saturday moments after stepping out of a meeting with MILF leaders in Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao.

Edu Abdullah, 45, died instantly from four gunshot wounds, the military said.

Initial reports said Abdullah, the commander of the MILF's 104 Base Command in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat and truce coordinator for the MILF in the province, was standing outside the MILF satellite office at Crossing, Simuay village at about 3 p.m. yesterday when he was approached by two men. One of the men shot him at close range. The suspects immediately fled.

Both the MILF and the military report said, however, that only one suspect was involved.

One suspect

They said the killing of Abdullah was motivated by "personal reasons" and would not affect the peace negotiations between the Moro secessionists and the government.

The MILF, the largest remaining Muslim guerrilla force in the country, signed a ceasefire with the government to pave the way for peace talks, but sporadic clashes in remote areas have persisted.

"It has nothing to do with the ceasefire agreement," said MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu.

According to both Kabalu and a military official who spoke on condition of anonymity, Abdulah was shot dead after stepping out of a meeting with MILF political affairs chief Gazali Jaafar at the latter's house at Crossing.

They said Abdullah had gone to the meeting to discuss ways of "strengthening" the peace agreement.

Kabalu said the lone gunman had followed the victim from Isulan.

"I think (he was killed because of) personal reasons," Kabalu said.

Violations

Maj. Julieto Ando, spokesperson of the Army's 6th Infantry Division here, said Abdullah was waiting for a ride that would take him to Cotabato City just outside the MILF satellite office when he was shot from behind.

"He was hit on the head and died on the spot," Ando said.

"We believe the incident was triggered by a personal grudge," Jaafar said.

He said the MILF was working with the police to solve the killing.

Jaafar said the MILF was looking for someone to replace Abdullah as truce coordinator. *Allan A. Nawa and Edwin O. Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau, and Martin P. Marfil*

HK levy resisted

FOREIGN domestic helpers in Hong Kong, led by Filipinos, have heightened protests against the proposed HK$500 tax on their salaries, anticipating an official decision.

Hong Kong Chief Executive Tung Chee-Hwa is expected to make a major policy statement on Wednesday which would include parliament's ruling on the proposed tax, Labor Undersecretary Manuel Imson said.

Filipino embassy and labor officials in Hong Kong have been meeting with Indonesian and Thai counterparts to strengthen opposition to the levy.

Mass actions are ongoing, Imson said, to put pressure on the HK government. Jesus is Lord movement leader Eddie Villanueva led a prayer rally in the territory, which some 10,000 people attended. *Blanche Rivera*

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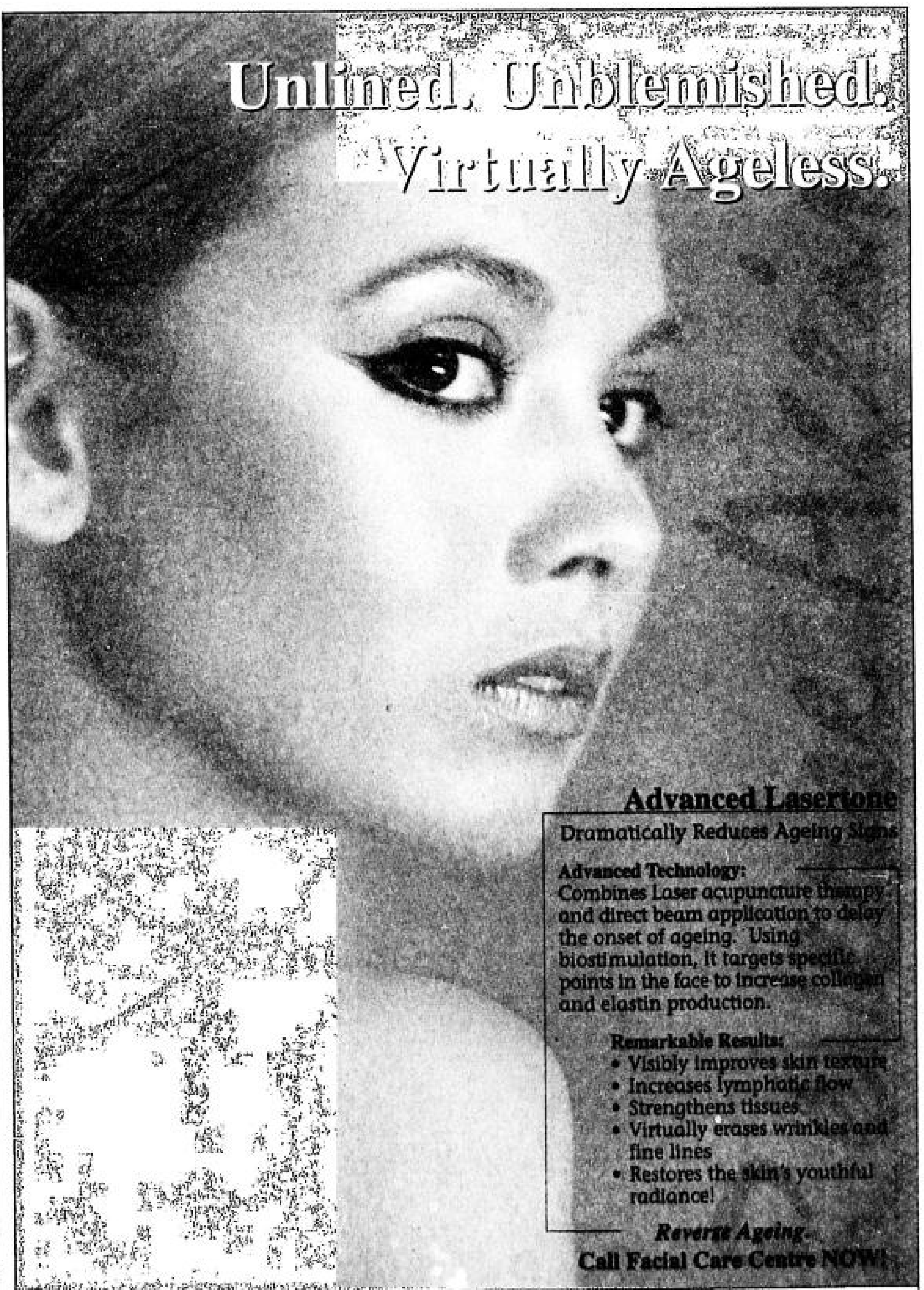
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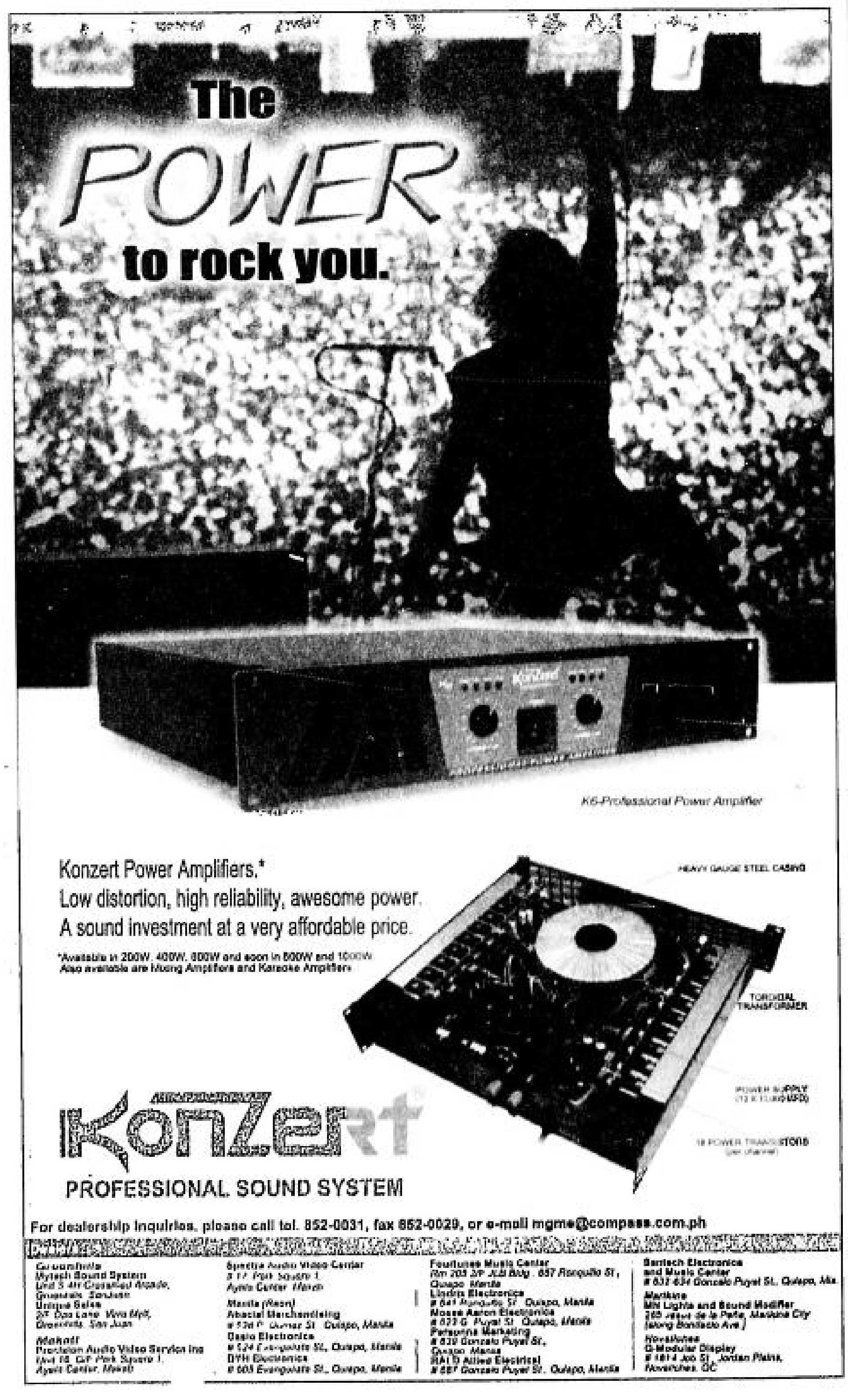

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Iraq war suspense to last 3 more weeks

From page A1

yet to issue its verdict.

Barring unforeseen developments, the suspense should last another three weeks, until chief UN arms inspector Hans Blix presents a crucial report to the UN Security Council on Jan. 27 on the outcome of the first two months of inspections.

For the time being, all the United Nations will say is that its inspectors are being granted access to all the sites they want to check. But it has said nothing about their findings and is not expected to do so before Jan. 27.

UN weapons experts scoured more suspect sites across Iraq on Sunday, pouncing on the headquarters of the Iraqi arms monitoring body in Baghdad, a hospital in the north and a university in the south as more US and British troops prepared to join comrades already massed in the Gulf.

In a surge of military preparation after the New Year, Washington has ordered Marines and 11,000 infantry men to the region. A British newspaper earlier reported that Britain would send more than 20,000 troops and mobilize 7,000 reservists next week.

The US military also reported that aircraft taking part in US-British patrols over southern Iraq attacked three Iraqi military communication sites on Saturday.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Naji Sabri on Saturday accused the United States of trying to destabilize Iraq by supporting Iraqi exiles whom he described as "mercenaries and terrorists."

In a letter to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, Sabri said US plans to train exiled Iraqis to take part in a post-Saddam Hussein administration broke international laws.

"Bush's administration is supporting mercenaries and terrorists to destabilize the political situation and the social security in Iraq," said the letter published in Baghdad newspapers.

Washington has threatened war if Iraq does not give up alleged chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. But Saddam denies having such arms and says the UN inspections will expose American claims as lies.

More inspections

Iraqi officials said a UN inspection team on Sunday paid a surprise visit to the Iraqi Monitoring Directorate (IMD) in the center of the capital.

The IMD is the government body acting as liaison to the inspectors who are hunting for alleged weapons of mass destruction. IMD officials have accompanied the experts on every inspection since they resumed work in Iraq on Nov. 27.

A day after the inspectors set up a permanent presence in Mosul, 375 km north of Baghdad, they sprang into action, swooping on Ibn Sina hospital in the city.

Another inspection team that has been in Basra, 550 km south of Baghdad, for the past two days visited a university in the port city for the second day.

A team visited the April 7 Public Co. on the outskirts of Baghdad and another headed toward an undisclosed location to the west, the Iraqi officials said.

Teams from the UN Monitoring, Inspection and Verification Commission (Unmovic) and International Atomic Energy Agency (Iaea) examined seven sites, including a brewery and an air base, on Saturday.

Inspections are now in their sixth week but the experts have yet to disclose any evidence of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons programs. The inspectors must report their findings to the Security Council by Jan. 27.

The council passed a resolution in November demanding Iraq give a full account of its weapons programs and cooperate with weapons inspectors, as required by resolutions stemming from the 1991 Gulf War, or face tough consequences.

Liberation or conquest?

President George W. Bush, addressing thousands of cheering soldiers in his home state of Texas on Friday, said a war against Iraq would be one of liberation, not conquest.

"Should Saddam seal his fate by refusing to disarm, by ignoring the opinion of the world, you'll be fighting not to conquer anybody but to liberate people," he told the troops.

Warplanes taking part in US-British patrols over southern Iraq dropped nearly a quarter of a million leaflets over southern Iraq on Saturday urging Iraqis to listen to radio broadcasts slamming Saddam, the US military said.

In a separate statement, the Florida-based US Central Command said allied aircraft used precision-guided weapons to strike three Iraqi communications sites near An Nasiriyah, about 270 km southeast of Baghdad, "in response to Iraqi hostile acts." It did not specify the hostile acts.

Earlier, Iraq's armed forces said US and British warplanes hit civilian targets on Friday in a "no-fly zone" in southern Iraq, but the US Central Command said it had no information on such a strike. The US military has said allied aircraft hit military targets in Iraq on Wednesday and Thursday.

Opposition to war

Seeking to head off a war in Iraq, Turkey's premier met Syrian President Bashar al-Assad Saturday at the start of a tour of Middle East countries.

Prime Minister Abdullah Gul said he and Assad had discussed concrete steps to try to avoid war in their neighbor, but gave no details.

"We want to do everything we can. This means not saying 'We do not want war' and then sitting back and waiting for the war to break out," Gul told reporters in Damascus.

"We still believe that this problem can be solved without war."

German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, who won reelection last year with a firm anti-war stance, was quoted on Saturday as reiterating Germany would not take part in any military action but declining to say how Berlin might vote in the UN Security Council on a war.

In an interview with Der Spiegel weekly, Schroeder denied that by leaving open how Germany might vote in the council, he was going back on his critical stance on any war against Iraq. *Reports from AP and Reuters*

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Time to bite bullet with GMA not running

From page A1

Having been denied its honeymoon—during which losing political groups in the past were bound by civility and tradition to give a new government a chance to put its programs in place—her administration found itself in an atmosphere of distrust and fragile public confidence.

Climate of confidence

In announcing her withdrawal from the presidential contest in 2004, Ms Macapagal sought to restore at the very last stage of her short-term presidency the climate of confidence and trust all her predecessors had enjoyed at the start of their term.

Whether she will succeed in ushering an era of First-100-Days-like good feeling in her last 18 months in office remains to be seen; her task is certainly formidable.

In renouncing reelection, the President has virtually asked the Filipino people to trust her with blind faith. This call for trust is anchored on the argument that since she has cast off the heavy burden of making decisions based on her reelection chances, decisions post-Dec. 30 will now be determined by the larger national interest rather than personal political gain.

Apparently, the immediate reaction to this act of self-abnegation has been favorable in rebuilding confidence in a political system that has increasingly been weighed down by the tradition that Filipino politicians never give up power and would only do so inside a coffin.

With her withdrawal, the President is now experiencing a second wind. If she had a full six-year term, there would have been ample time to show results and then the First 100 Days would have been the pivotal period for setting directions and sparking momentum for exciting change.

Instead, the President has to work double-time to make up for what she had lost in the past two years, and what's more daunting, to reverse the descent of the nation into economic stagnation and political strife. What the renewed President is doing now is embarking on a series of confidence-building measures designed to establish the mark that she is determined to curb corruption, revitalize the economy and exercise the authority of the state in restoring law and order.

A strong state

Within the time frame of 18 months, it is well-nigh impossible to build the structure of a strong state—described as an entity that is not captive to vested interests and that has a relative autonomy from attempts by predatory vested groups to monopolize control of the means to distribute wealth in the national community. It is a state that can with authority put the public interest above those of vested interests. Given the time constraint, she can, at best, only lay the foundation of a strong state.

More achievable within this time frame is the launching of confidence-building initiatives. The resignation of Justice Secretary Hernando Perez must be seen in this light. His departure from the Cabinet removes him from the line of fire from attacks of alleged corruption.

The President has yet to define her programs for the next 18 months. While her withdrawal has unleashed the energy for reforms and tremendous enthusiasm from some of her political allies to help shape the direction of her "non-partisan government of national unity," differences have already emerged over specifications. Speaker Jose de Venecia seeks a Cabinet of national unity and reconciliation based on multisectoral and multi-ideological representation, but the President does not appear to buy this concept in its entirety. She leans toward the traditional approach of Cabinet selection, based on individuals' credentials for the job rather than their philosophical outlook.

In her late-blooming 100 Days, it is clear that the President must define what she really wants to do and what her priorities are. She must restrain the exuberance of her political allies eager to include their ingredients in the new stew that is the rejuvenated national agenda.

What she defines, she has to implement at all costs and regardless of whether or not they are popular. Popularity is no longer part of the equation because she has removed herself from the arena of the popularity context and has risen above petty considerations.

There are three areas of primary concern, as indicated by opinion polls. First, the economy, followed by law and order, and then corruption.

She can now encourage Director General Hermogenes Ebdane of the Philippine National Police to carry out a purge of the PNP.

She can now view the Meralco financial crisis and the purchased power adjustment issue with a cold eye, considering long-term solutions that can make power generation viable and ensure efficient and sufficient energy supplies at reasonable cost, without having to think of political gain.

In short, the President's withdrawal has given her an opportunity to get things done regardless of who gets hurt and other such political consequences. This is an opportunity denied even to leaders enjoying a political honeymoon after election.

In other words, this is no longer a time for a honeymoon; it is time to bite the bullet. Few Presidents have been offered this opportunity to bite the bullet without inviting political damage to their government.

Her withdrawal has bought her immunity from electoral retribution.

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, January 6, 2003
After Epiphany

1st Reading: 1 Jn 3:22-4:6
Gospel: Mt 4:12-17, 23-25

When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. He left Nazareth and went to settle down in Capernaum, a town by the lake of Galilee, at the border of Zebulun and Naphtali.

In this way the word of the prophet Isaiah was fulfilled: Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali crossed by the Road of the Sea, and you who live by the Jordan, Galilee, land of pagans, listen:

The people who lived in darkness have seen a great light; on those who live in the land of the shadow of death, a light has shone.

From that time on Jesus began to proclaim his message, "Change your ways: the kingdom of heaven is near."

Jesus went around all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom, and curing all kinds of sickness and disease among the people.

The news about him spread through the whole of Syria, and the people brought all their sick to him, and all those who suffered: the possessed, the deranged, the paralyzed, and he healed them all. Large crowds followed him from Galilee and the Ten Cities, from Jerusalem, Judea, and from across the Jordan.

Commentary

Yesterday's theme of light is deepened in today's reading. Jesus enters a world of darkness and suffering, overshadowed by death. How does he illumine this dark world? He goes around Galilee doing three things. He "proclaims the Good News of the Kingdom," overcoming the darkness of hopelessness and cynicism. He "teaches in the synagogues," overcoming the darkness of ignorance and meaninglessness by patient, enlightening explanation. He "cures every disease and illness among the people," vanquishing the darkness of human pain with new life and healing. We Christians, whom Jesus honors with the title, "the light of the world," are called to similar service on behalf of so many people of our time who still remain in the night of hopelessness, meaninglessness and death.

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DIGEST BY R. B. VERA

GMA basks in Cebuanos' approval

CEBU CITY—There were photo ops, but no interviews. President Macapagal-Arroyo was on "private time" on Saturday night as she led the principal sponsors at the wedding here of Gerard Garcia, the son of former Cebu Mayor Alvin Garcia, to Christina Marie Wagner.

And if she was burdened by the nation's problems in any way, she did not show it.

Ms Macapagal appeared very relaxed. She was also described as "charming" and "very chic."

During the ceremony which started at 6 p.m., she sat on the front pew of the Cebu Cathedral, quietly smiling.

She wore a shimmery brown-colored gown with matching shawl and evening purse, and diamond and pearl earrings.

The President had reason to be happy. Cebuanos had apparently approved of her recent decision not to run in 2004, and received her warmly. She was swarmed by admirers who waited to shake her hand and express their support. After the rites at around 8 p.m., the people crowded around her again. The smile never left her face.

She had arrived in the city without her usual entourage of government officials or family.

The President decided to skip the wedding reception at the Cebu Plaza Hotel. From the cathedral she returned to her Cebu Waterfront Hotel, where she had a closed-door meeting with mayors, vice mayors, barangay officials, health workers and traders. *Jolene R. Bulambot, PDI Visayas Bureau*

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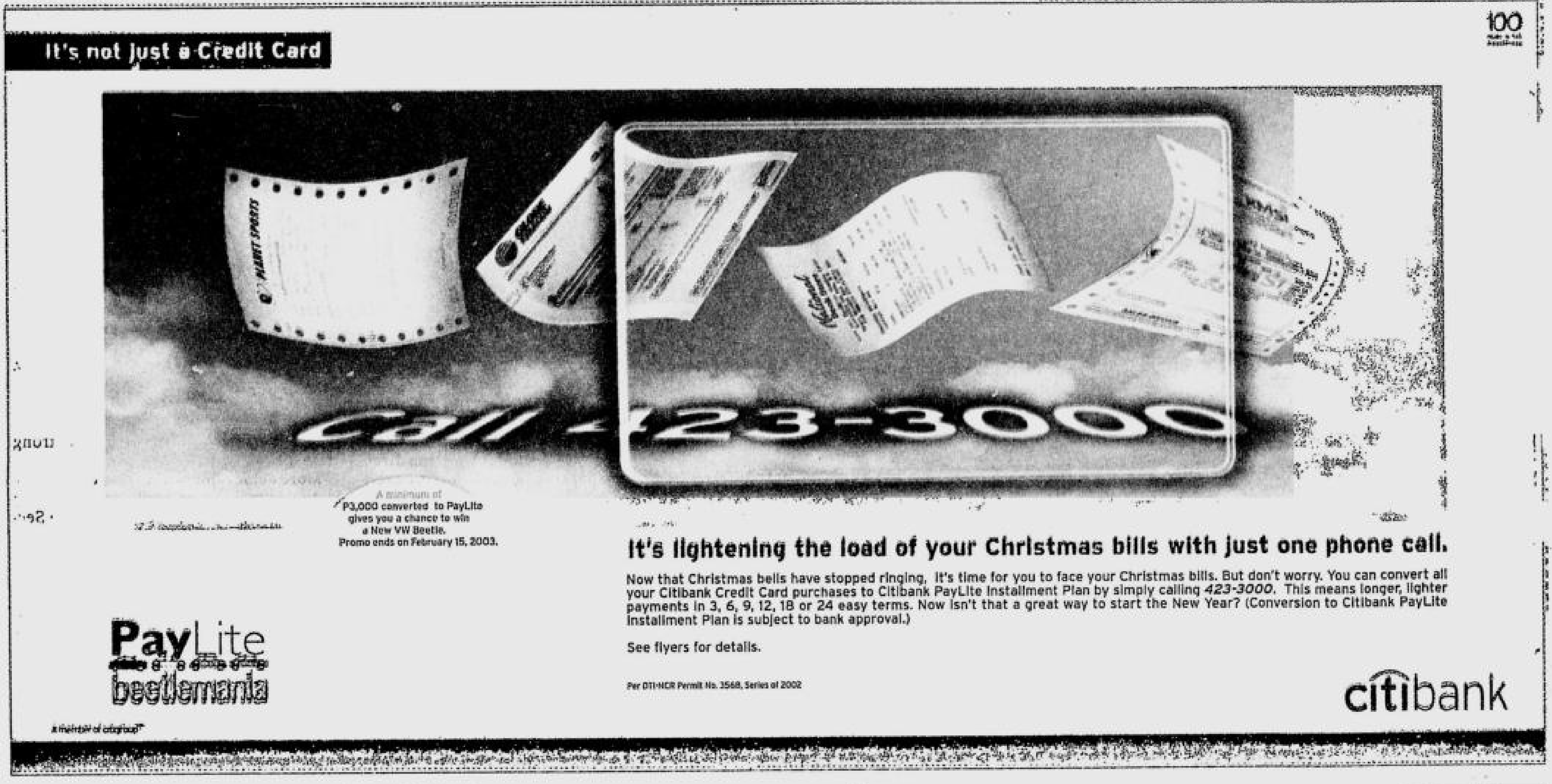
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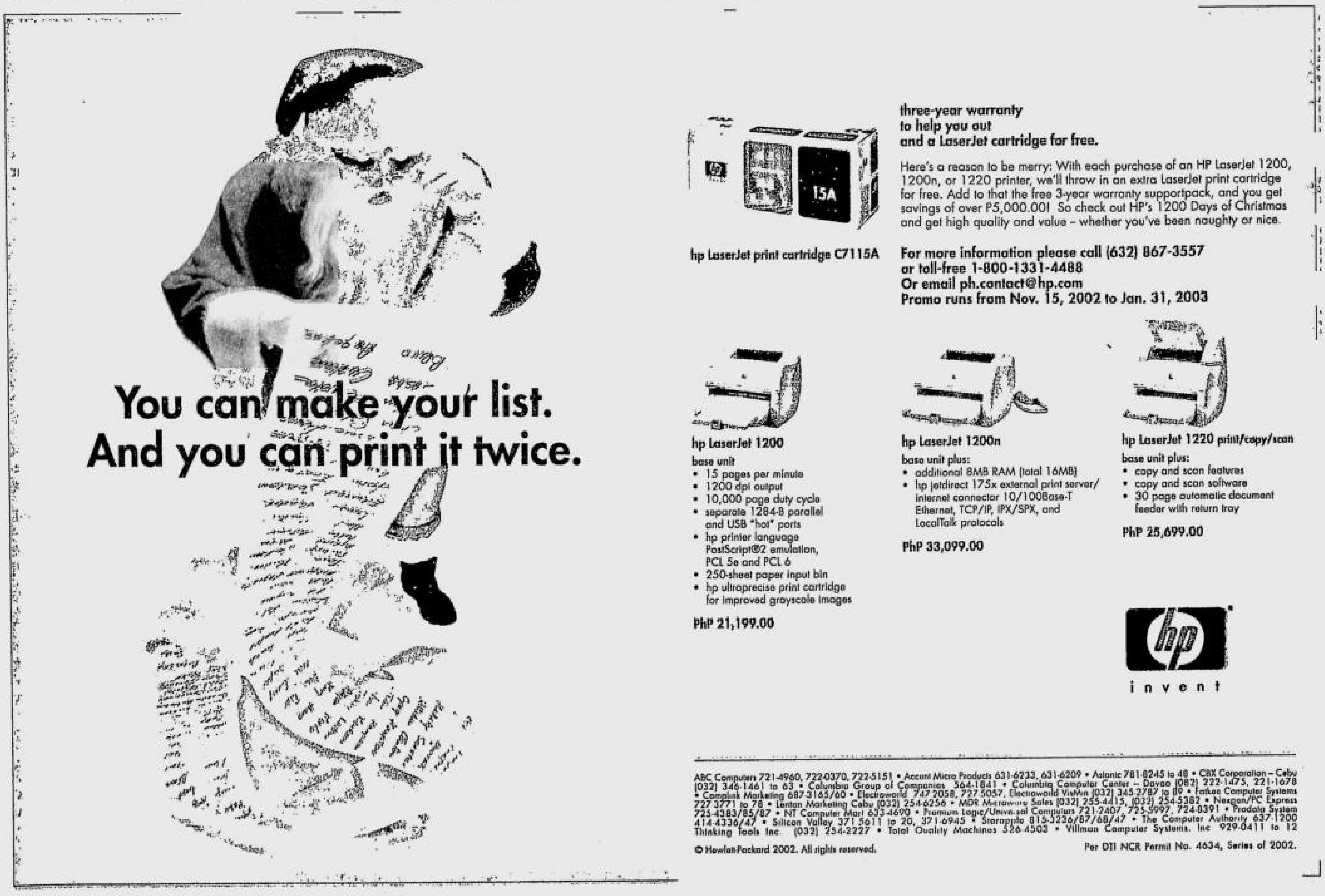
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IS IT SUBSTANTIAL COMPLIANCE?
OR
COMPLIANCE WAS SUBSTANTIAL?

FORMER DENR SECRETARY HEHERSON T. ALVAREZ

On May 16, 1997 while a Senator in the Tenth Congress, you filed in the Senate P.S. Resolution No. 856 which was:

"URGING THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES, ACCOUNTABILITY OF PUBLIC OFFICERS AND INVESTIGATIONS, LABOR,EMPLOYMENT AND HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT, WAYS AND MEANS, TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO SYNDICATED ILLEGAL MINING AND REFINING ACTIVITIES IN THE MT. DIWALWAL AREA WHICH HAVE RESULTED IN UNREPORTED DEATHS FROM LANDSLIDES, UNDERPAID AND UNPROTECTED MINING AND REFINING LABOR, WORK-RELATED DISABILITIES AND INJURIES FROM MINE CAVE-INS, LACK OF PEACE AND ORDER, 10 MILLION TONS OF MERCURY-CONTAMINATED TAILINGS, CYANIDE POLLUTION, AND SILTATION OF FARMS IN SIX (6) BARANGAYS."

Your **WHEREASES**, of the Resolution contained, among others, the following:

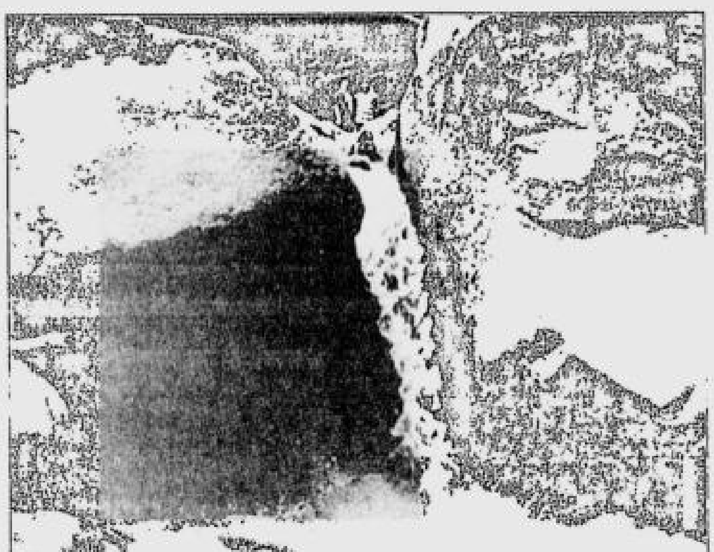
"for the past ten years, (Mt. Diwalwal) has been the site of syndicated illegal mining and refining activities which have continued to operate and to expand with business permits from local government units only;"

"the same activities which were formerly classified as "small scale" but are now using advanced tunneling technology and explosives, still do not have the required mining and transport permits from the Mines and Geosciences Bureau, dynamiting permits from the Philippine National Police, labor permits from the Department of Labor and Employment, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, health permits from the Department of Health, and sales permits from the Department of Trade and Industry;"

"these illegal mining and refining outfits also failed to treat their contaminated tailings and dispose of it properly, endangering the health and lives of mine workers and communities by the river system;"

"two British and MGB/DENR geological surveys last year established that these "small scale" mining and mercury refining operations caused sediment and heavy metal pollution in rivers near the gold rush areas;"

"about 10 (million) tons of mercury and cyanide contaminated tailings have been washed down the river systems, threatening the four (4) aquifer basins in East Mindanao including the Agusan-Davao aquifer basin, and consequently, constraining economic development for Mindanao and the Gold Triangle;"



Sampling site No. 025

Naboc River

(1.5 km away from Depot detachment)

Mt. Diwalwal

Location: 7° 48.913' N
126° 09.978' E

Mercury in Samples:
[Hg] water = 312.88 ppb
[Hg] sediment = 59.50 ug/g
[Hg] banana-leaves = 33.32 ug/g
[Hg] banana-stem = 1.70 ug/g
[Hg] banana-roots = 812.99 ug/g

"this situation continues only due to the lack of exercise or abuse of authority among government officials which gives undue preference to illegal miners and

YOU BLAMED THE DENR FOR ALLOWING THE MASSIVE POLLUTION AND ILLEGAL OPERATIONS

"negligence vs. mining gangs."

"allowing the mercury content of stream sediments in the gold triangle (to) raise from 150 to 600 parts per billion (ppb) which scandalously exceeds the DENR standard of 5ppb."

"the toleration of illegal activities had caused massive mercury poisoning in the mines. The victims are children."

"The Philippines is losing P3.3 billion annually to a combination of syndicated illegal activity and the laxity of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in the enforcement of environmental laws."

"Mercury, a toxic heavy metal used to crude gold extraction from ores, has already polluted many areas in the Davao-Agusan water basin."

THESE WERE THE FINDINGS OF THE COMMITTEES ON ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES CHAIRED BY SEN. LOREN LEGARDA; HEALTH AND DEMOGRAPHY CHAIRED BY SEN. JUAN FLAVIER OF THE ELEVENTH CONGRESS IN THEIR COMMITTEE REPORT No. 50, DATED MAY 19, 1999.

1. Deforestation is also one of the adverse effects of mining. The proliferation of mining operations has long been considered the primary culprit in the wanton felling of trees on Mt. Diwalwal. Timber derived from forests is used for the construction of portals and tunnels in the mining site.
2. The indiscriminate dumping of mine tailings into the rivers also caused siltation, which in turn damaged agricultural lands and irrigation systems. An estimated 20 million tons of mercury-contaminated tailings threaten the entire East Mindanao Gold Triangle.
3. The Senate hearings firmly established that there are no legal miners in the gold rush area. All mining firms operating in the area have admitted that under the guidelines in DAO No. 34 of R.A. No. 7076, they do not meet the definition of small scale miners. According to these operators, the only reason that they continue to operate despite the absence of necessary permits is the tolerant attitude of government officials.
4. **The illegal transport of explosives which go mostly to the Helica and Blucor Group shows who control the mining activities in Diwalwal.**
5. A persisting issue in Mt. Diwalwal is the legality of the actual occupants and operators in the area. The constant appeal of the more than 20,000 residents in the area who rely primarily on mining for their livelihood is the legalization will not solve the continuing degradation of the environment. Neither should we accede to the request for such without considering the consequences these operations have on their immediate environment as well as to the environment of the communities downstream.

SHORTLY AFTER YOU BECAME DENR SECRETARY IN APRIL 2001, AND A SERIES OF MEETINGS WITH THE MT. DIWALWAL MINERS, YOU HAD A DRAMATIC CHANGE IN YOUR OUTLOOK:

- ☐ **The illegal miners are no longer big. They became small-scale miners. "Bigtime Illegal Miners kalit nahimong gamay sa milagro ni Alvarez."**
- ☐ **You now want to avoid grave socio-economic dislocation and the potential for political radicalization and extremism. (WHATEVER THIS MEANS; Unsa kaha kini?).**
- ☐ **You now want a win win situation, to uphold social justice even at the expense of the more numerous and legally operating farmers who invested their lifetime savings in the Naboc River Irrigation System. The irrigated farmlands are now silted with mercury laden mine tailings.**
- ☐ **You even signed service contracts to continue the disposal of cyanide and mercury laden tailings into the creeks and tributaries leading into the Naboc River.**

HAVING BEEN CONVINCED THAT THESE BIG ILLEGAL MINERS HAVE NOW BECOME SMALL SCALE WITH A SOCIAL PROBLEM, SEC. ALVAREZ PROCEEDED TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

1.You segregated 8,100 hectares from the forestlands of a forest reserve through a DENR memorandum order.

Section 4, Article XII of the 1987 Constitution requires that a law be enacted by Congress to deduct any area from the country's forestland. Even the President of the country need to have an enabling law from Congress to segregate areas from forestland more so if it is a forest reserve.

Therefore, as the DENR Memorandum No. 9 you issued was unauthorized by any enabling law, it is illegal and a usurpation of legislative authority.

2. **Having segregated 8,100 hectares through your illegal DMO No. 9, you proceeded to sign service contracts in behalf of the DENR in violation of EO 301 of 1987 that says, "No contract for public services shall be entered into without public bidding."**
3. **Under the service contracts you signed, you arbitrarily fixed the sharing between the government and your contractors instead of through a bidding process as practiced by other government institutions.**

WHY?

4. **With the service contracts, the massive pollution continues.**

You were very hot on the release of gases because of your concern for global warming. Yet, you tolerated the daily discharge of thousands of tons of mercury and cyanide laden tailing polluting the Naboc River, irrigated farmlands and the Agusan River.

Why can you see CFC gases but not the massive milky pus like polluted discharge of your service contractors into the creeks and valleys of Monkayo? "Nakakita ka sa hangin, pero wala nimo makita ang murag nana nga tubig sa Naboc River?"

The farmers whose rice fields had now been silted and poisoned even formally presented this to you during your confirmation hearings. You promised to stop the pollution, but never did.

WHAT HAVE CAUSED YOU TO BE VERY AGGRESSIVE IN MAKING THESE ILLEGAL ISSUANCE AND CONTRACTS TO CONTINUE THE SUBSTANTIAL ILLEGAL EARNING FROM DIWALWAL'S POLLUTING OPERATIONS?

WAS THE GLITTER OF GOLD BLINDING?

WAS IT SUBSTANTIAL COMPLIANCE?
OR
COMPLIANCE WAS VERY SUBSTANTIAL?

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MT. Diwalwal Monkayo
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Arthur Baltazar
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Association Of Barangay Chairmen
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Compostela Valley Province

Romeo Disto
President
Naboc River Farmers/Irrigators Cooperative
Narboc, Monkayo
Compostela Valley Province

Anti-corruption law to get GMA's nod

By Rocky Nazareno

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo is expected to sign the bill on government procurement—the "boldest anti-corruption measure," according to opposition Sen. Edgardo Angara—that will be passed when Congress resumes next week.

Angara, principal author of the Senate version, said the new bill would "reform the bidding and awards process for government supplies and infrastructure projects."

Less certain at this point but no less hopeful of passage is administration Sen. Francis Pangilinan's bill on the Judicial Reform and Modernization Program , calendared for third reading.

"A modernized judiciary should form part of the political legacy of President Macapagal, who has already made history by withdrawing from the 2004 elections," Pangilinan said.

The main features of the procurement bill include scrapping the protracted bidding and awards process, in order to broaden the pool of bidders and suppliers for every government project; and terminating the awesome powers of the prequalification and bidding awards committees.

The new law also eliminates negotiated contracts and simplified bids in favor of transparent and above-board public bidding.

Angara noted the World Bank's recently released report which showed that the Philippines lost $48 billion in the last 20 years due to corruption, and that Transparency International had ranked the government as the 11th most corrupt in the world.

"The brutal wages of official corruption has been a major source of embarrassment for the country," he said.

Pangilinan believes a modernized judiciary would be "relished from generation to generation."

US may accept teachers

NURSES may not be the only Filipino workers leaving this year as the United States opens up its market to foreign teachers, and recruiters relax the requirements necessary to work as teachers abroad.

Helen Custodio, the former labor attache to Washington, said that 65 percent of teachers in the US would be retiring in the next six years, and schools are scrambling for replacements.

Custodio, who recently returned to the country after her stint in the US capital, said the labor department was working out a memorandum of agreement with the US to facilitate the employment of Filipino teachers.

She said the "debilitating shortage" of teachers, principals and superintendents in the US has placed the market for teachers there as "one of the biggest" in the next 10 years.

"The locals do not want to teach in the inner cities because it poses high risk and is more expensive . . . education graduates in the US go to other professions because of the higher pay," she said.

The US is facing a shortage of 2.2 million teachers in the next few years.

Much of the demand is for elementary and secondary schoolteachers specializing in Math, Science and special education. *Blanche S. Rivera*

Gov't approves securitization of Ilocos tobacco excise funds

CANDON CITY—Ilocos Sur Rep. Eric Singson said the budget department has approved in principle the proposed securitization of the tobacco excise funds, covered by Republic Act 7171, or the Tobacco Excise Tax Law, to ensure their immediate release to tobacco farmers.

"Finally, we find a win-win situation for the best interest of our tobacco growers and the government," he said.

Singson said he and other congressional leaders from the region had met with Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin recently to discuss the proposal.

It was agreed that the securitization program would cover the still unreleased P1.2-billion share of the Ilocos provinces for 2001, the P2.4-billion appropriation for 2002 and this year's appropriation.

He said President Macapagal-Arroyo had approved the proposal when this was relayed to her by Boncodin.

Securitization means the conversion of bank loans and other assets—in this case the Ilocos provinces' share of the excise taxes—into marketable securities for sale to investors. Securities offered for sale can be purchased by banks and other depository institutions. *Leoncio Balbin Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Gonzalez raps Pimentel

DEPUTY Speaker Raul Gonzalez yesterday said opposition Sen. Aquilino Pimentel's dismissal of the "unity government" proposed by Speaker Jose de Venecia was "a knee-jerk reaction by a mega-politician."

Gonzalez said in a phone interview that Pimentel was "part of the heckling group (hurling) all kinds of criticism against the administration."

He lamented that "the hecklers had succeeded in their agenda . . . for the President not to run in 2004." He said it was "unfortunate."

De Venecia had suggested the unity government after President Macapagal-Arroyo announced her decision.

The Speaker was just trying to help the administration, being part of it, Gonzalez said. But he said it wasn't going to work because it was impossible to bring people with divergent ideologies to work together in government. *Christine O. Avendano*

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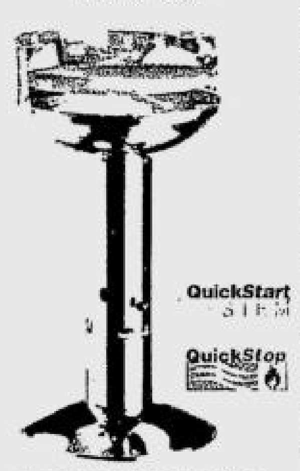

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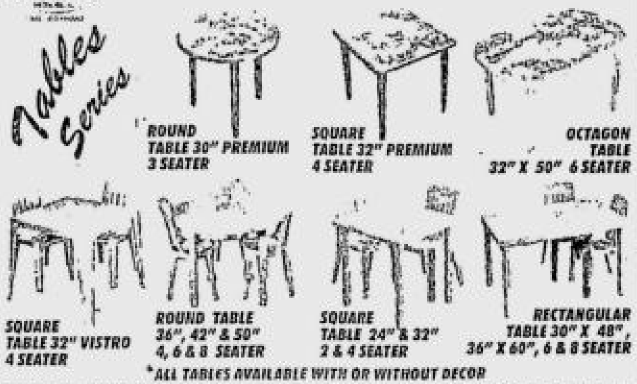

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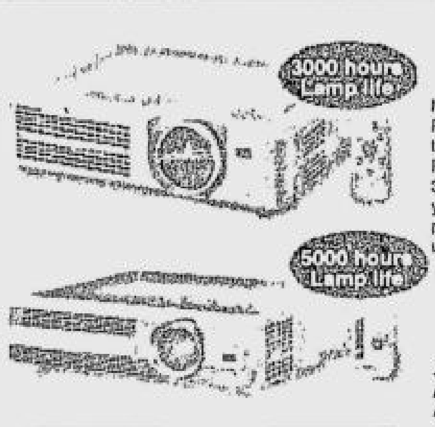

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A moratorium

EDITORIAL

THE "ENDLESS politicking" that the President has denounced isn't the province of politicians alone. Others also play an influential role: the press, polling firms, even the public at large. The vicious cycle generated by "too much politics," therefore, can only be broken if everyone—and not just the President—practice the discipline of self-restraint.

This is, of course, much easier said than done. Filipinos are Aristotelian to an extreme degree: We are political animals, and it shows in the politicized nature of our culture.

Our weddings are political caucuses in the making: no list of sponsors is complete without the requisite mayor or congressman or senator. Our associations are miniature political assemblies: elections for village board, school committee or club council are do-or-die affairs. And so on, *ad nauseam*.

But if we agree with the President's basic assumption ("endless politicking has hampered our country from attaining progress"), and support her historic initiative to de-couple politics from governance ("following the example of Jose Rizal, let us think of country and not just of self"), then we have the responsibility to see the matter whole. It isn't only politicians who engage in too much politics.

A faithful reader, for instance, has taken the media to task for helping encourage excessive politicking. Fr. Jose Gutay of Quezon City asks pointedly: "Who's giving (politicians) the opportunity to dominate people's time and space?" The media, he writes. "Let's just be honest about it: politicians enjoy talking because the media enjoy (and make money by) making them talk."

His letter makes painful reading, partly because in his zeal to air his concerns he oversimplifies the matter, but on the whole he makes a valid point. Media organizations and politicians have an overly close, sometimes unhealthy relationship. They are, to borrow the language of psychology, co-dependents.

But it isn't only the bottom line that drives political coverage; as the TV anchors who interviewed the President after she made her dramatic announcement inadvertently demonstrated, it is also a certain journalistic mindset. This is the kind of journalism that thrives on sound bites, on he-said, she-said stories, on the politics of personality. Hence, it was almost inevitable that President Macapagal-Arroyo was asked on live television the very question that her decision had made irrelevant: Who will you endorse in 2004?

To her credit, Ms Macapagal firmly and politely told the interviewers: "*Wala munang pulitika* (No politics just yet)."

The President's renunciation of her right to run in 2004 is, thus, also a challenge to all media: to learn to report on programs and policies, rather than personalities.

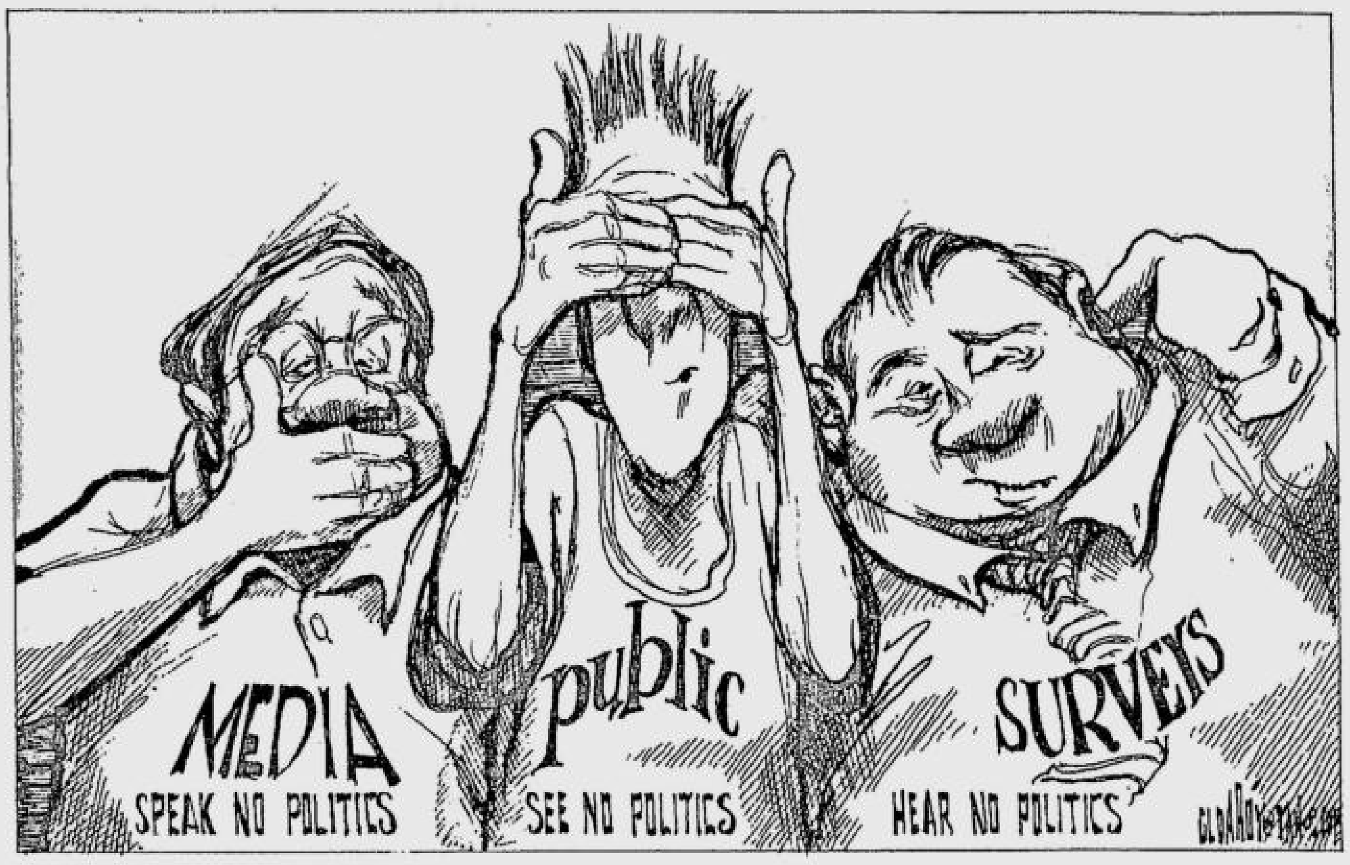
Polling firms encourage excessive politicking too. The cycle of quarterly surveys is grist for the journalistic mill, and this is just as well, because it is better for the public to enjoy access to privately commissioned information. The problem does not lie so much with the survey firms with a good track record, but with the fly-by-night operators who misuse the laws of statistics and probability to float a candidate's name or sink it. Sadly for all of us, even the alleged results of dubious surveys become the talk of the town.

The public also bears part of the responsibility. By and large, Filipinos look upon politicians as only a lower class of celebrity. This is partly why we are too forgiving of politicians who have abused our trust; we see them as a fixture of our entertainment culture. This is also why political talk occupies so much of our idle time: it is a source of distraction, a form of recreation.

The discipline of self-restraint comes with a steep price.

The President's Rizal Day announcement wasn't the first time she asked for a moratorium on politics. In her first State of the Nation Address, she called for a temporary end to the politicking that had bedevilled her administration almost from Day One. For obvious reasons, the opposition did not oblige.

This time around, the entire nation is listening, because her appeal came at great personal cost. Whether her appeal succeeds depends on the capacity of the other co-dependents in the vicious cycle of excessive politics to make the same sacrifice.



FVR, Erap can't run in 2004, but Cory can

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

I'M not a lawyer but I think the petition for delaratory relief filed in court by a former governor will be dismissed. The petition asks the court's opinion on whether or not former President Ramos may seek election in the 2004 presidential polls. The petitioner is asking for a mere "opinion" of the court, but courts are called upon to rule only on actual cases, not on hypothetical questions.

Besides, the petitioner has no legal personality to file the petition. He is not the party in interest. He is not a former President of the Philippines who will be affected, one way or the other, by the court's ruling. Hence the petition, I think, will not even get to first base.

I am glad that an expert in election laws agrees. Lawyer Romulo Macalintal, whom you see speaking on legal issues on the evening daily newscast "Teledyaryo," faxed a statement saying that "even if the petition is filed by an "elected" president, the same is also dismissible because the said provision of the Constitution is very clear and unequivocal and it does not need any further interpretation."

Section 4, Article VII of the Constitution provides that a person elected as President "shall not be eligible for reelection." Some quarters say that bars a president from "immediate" reelection but that if there is a gap of one term, he may again run for election, which should not be considered a "reelection." But these quarters forget to read further into the same section. It says "No person who has succeeded as President and has served as such for more than four (4) years, shall be qualified for election to the same office at anytime." Note the words "at anytime." A former President cannot run for President "at anytime" whether or not there is a gap between his finished term and the new one.

Said Macalintal: "If a person who merely succeeds as President for more than four years is not entitled to run for President at 'anytime,' with more reason that an elected President cannot qualify to run for the same office at 'anytime' which is the clear import of Section 4, Article VII of the Constitution."

Former Presidents Ramos and Joseph Estrada are barred from running in the 2004 presidential election but former President Corazon Aquino is not, Macalintal said. Ramos and Estrada were "elected" under the 1987 Constitution. Cory Aquino, however, "was NOT elected President under the 1987 Constitution but merely INSTALLED as such on account of the Edsa I Revolution or during a revolutionary government. As a matter of fact, it was after Cory's 'installation' that the 1987 Constitution was adopted and ratified by the people which is an added argument why she is still entitled to run for President."

Should Ramos and Estrada run in 2004 and file their respective candidacies, Macalintal continued, "it is not for them to prove that they are still qualified. It is up for other presidential candidates or any registered voter to prove that they are not qualified by filing a petition for disqualification invoking Section 4, Article VII of the 1987 Constitution. And that would be the appropriate time to resolve such issue as there will already be an actual case or controversy requiring judicial action."

As for the politicians and assorted *sipsips* pushing Ramos to run—and being rewarded with cushy jobs later on—please leave him alone. He is in the sunset of his years and should be allowed to rest. He had his six years of glory; let others have theirs. He already said he doesn't want to run; he already runs every day for exercise. If he runs for President and loses, it won't be the *sipsip* politicians who would be disgraced but he. So let him keep his honor.

And FVR should put his foot down and tell the sycophants in no uncertain terms that he "doesn't want to be in the pressure cooker again."

Or is he flattered and tempted by the possibilities and is only being "*hele-hele bago quiere?*"

* * *

It is a good thing MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando is not inclined to accept the position of public works secretary. He is doing well as chair of the Metro Manila Development Authority. He is needed there. He is the only one able to clear the sidewalks of ambulant vendors. All his predecessors have failed. For the first time, we have somebody who has the ability and political will to restore order in our streets and sidewalks. We cannot have a strong republic if we allow anarchy to rule us.

If Fernando succeeds in restoring law and order in the streets, he deserves to be President. If the administration party is looking for a presidential candidate, there is your man. Don't waste him in the DPWH. Put him where he will be useful.

If the President needs a good public works secretary, appoint the best secretary the DPWH ever had. He is Engineer Aber Canlas, from her home province of Pampanga and a veteran in the department. Although only an acting secretary during the Marcos administration, he was the fastest engineer alive then. He supervised the construction of almost all important insfrastructures then but was never involved in any anomaly.

Postscript to an iniquity

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I NEVER got to comment on it last week. I finished most of my columns early in the week so I could indulge in uninterrupted revelry during the holidays, too. But it's too important to let itpass.

That is the bombing of the Marcos bust in Benguet. The NPA has owned up to the deed, Martin Montaña, spokesperson for the area, explaining it thus: "It is a blight upon a land that is the ancestral home of the Ibaloi people. It is a grim reminder of the monstrous crimes that the Marcoses have committed against the people. It is an abomination that had to be eliminated."

Gregorio Rosal, aka Ka Roger, CPP spokesperson, says as well: "The destruction of the bust is an expression of the people's deep-seated hatred of the fascist dictatorship and anger over the failure of the successive regimes from Corazon Aquino to the present to punish the Marcoses and their principal cohorts."

Well, to begin with, all this reminds me of a joke that used to circulate during Marcos' time. The story went that three poor people borrowed money from the KKK, Marcos' livelihood program, to set up small businesses. At the end of one year, the first one was found to be floundering. He had bought several pigs and started a piggery, but animal disease and the cost of feeds had brought him near the end of his tether. The second one was floundering as well. He had set up a small bakery, with the motto, "*Pag di umalsa ang masa, walang almusal sa umaga*," but, alas, the *alsa* in the price of flour and poor sales had made him go under.

The third however was flourishing. He had not only been able to repay his loan, he was planning to open up shop elsewhere. His business was simple. He had had a statue of Marcos built, and for the price of a few pesos, people could slap it around, kick it, or spit on it. There was a long queue in front of his house everyday.

True enough, there's something monstrously outrageous about that Marcos bust, which looms up on you when you take the, well, Marcos Highway up to Baguio. The sensation is not unlike being fried in your own fat. It's not unlike being made to celebrate Sept. 21, the date when Marcos officially declared martial law, as Thanksgiving Day. Which was the case then. It's not easy being made to revel over iniquity.

But it is in fact the very monstrous outrageousness of that bust that makes it useful, historically and culturally, and issues a plea for its being kept intact, such as it is now. Over time, it has taken on new meanings, all of them ironic ones. The original intention of the Marcoses might have been to show that the Ibalois, whom they exploited ruthlessly, were masochistic enough to give them that "gift of love," as Imelda insists even now, but that is no longer how it comes across, or indeed how anyone can project it to be. For most of us, it is a mere monument to folly.

Each time I myself behold it, physically or in pictures, I am reminded of Shelley's poem, "Ozymandias." The subject of the poem, the once powerful Egyptian ruler, Ramses, is now nothing more than a statue buried in sand. The poem ends with the classic line, the cry of the mighty laid low, "Gaze upon me, and despair." It is a reminder to all would-be Filipino tyrants: Gaze upon it, and despair.

Montaña is right, the Marcos bust is a grim reminder of Marcos' crimes against the people, not least of them the Ibalois. But for that very reason, why want to eliminate it? Why want to remove a tangible object that reminds people grimly of Marcos' crimes, not least the one of hubris? This country already being exceptionally forgetful, preferring to gloss over the past while chanting the mantra "life goes on," why help along a national amnesia? Few Filipinos now remember martial law as it is, the new generation seeing it the way our generation saw the War, or the *panahon ng Hapon*, as something only the old folks want to gather around for and tell tall tales of heroism about. The bust isn't just a grim reminder, it is a reminder of the grimness of martial law, the one thing that cries out to subsequent generations, "Gaze upon it and remember."

In fact, blowing the statue to bits does not only do little good, it does considerable harm. It falls right into our tendency as a people—brought on by religion—to make token or symbolic gestures to rid ourselves of blights instead of doing what really ought to be done. Or our tendency to make dramatic or ritualistic exorcisms to rid ourselves of our demons instead of slowly and surely driving them out from our midst. We confess our sins and go to Mass and suddenly we are healed. We flagellate and deny ourselves in Lent and suddenly we are cleansed. We burn effigies and blow up Marcos' bust and suddenly we are at peace with ourselves.

If the problem is the Marcoses being unpunished for their sins, the solution is to exert ourselves to bring them to justice, not make token gestures of doing so. So long as that bust is there, so long will there be a burning reminder of an errand that needs to be done. That bust is not a curse, it is a blessing. It is not unlike the "Eraptions" that Erap himself originally dished out to endear himself to the populace but ended up being his undoing. At the very least, we do not do the Ibalois a service to delude them into thinking an evil spirit has been removed from their land by the bombing of the bust, the grains will grow again and peace and contentment will flow into its furrows. That is no better than the delusion Marcos perpetrated that they loved their oppressor so much they made a god of him.

Marcos' spirit does continue to haunt the land. That cannot be dispelled by token destruction, that can only be dispelled by resolute remembering.

* * *

Comments to dequiros@vasia.com

Roco vs Cojuangco?

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

LAST Jan. 4, I reported about a meeting of the Nationalist People's Coalition called by former Senate President Ernesto Maceda at the residence of NPC chair Eduardo Cojuangco in Quezon City. I said among the items in the agenda is the possibility of fielding Cojuangco, who turns 68 this year, as NPC's presidential candidate in 2004, now that the field has been thrown wide open with the withdrawal of President Macapagal-Arroyo from the race. The other day a Northern Luzon congressman confirmed this report in the media, and yesterday, former Erap Press Secretary Ricardo Puno wrote in his column about a Cojuangco-Raul Roco match in 2004, opining that this "would offer the country a real choice." Puno was doubtless referring to the fact that if Roco runs against Fernando Poe Jr. or Sen. Panfilo Lacson, the intelligent voters would hardly have any choice—they'd go for Roco.

* * *

But Cojuangco? I myself am not sure about his eagerness to throw his hat into the presidential race. He'll be 69 next year—hardly the age to undergo the rigors of an extremely punishing campaign. Though he ran in 1992 and finished as a creditable third, Cojuangco has since been perceived as content to be kingmaker, instead of king. But will he be enticed to run once again?

Many factors work in his favor, namely his billions as well as the fact that the NPC counts with about 70 members of the House, most of whose campaigns Cojuangco helped fund. Ex-President Estrada would doubtless go for Cojuangco as he would be indebted to Erap for the ease with which he got back his empire.

But Roco would be a most formidable opponent as his appeal cuts across all classes. If they fight each other that would be an irony of note. Cojuangco was the prized client of the Accra Law Office which packaged all the coco levy deals. Roco was one of the brilliant lawyers servicing him.

* * *

Since I wrote that column item earlier about the case of my sister-in-law, Neomi Tañedo-Olivares, against the medical insurance firm, Blue Cross, wherein it refused to pay her hospital bills despite her fully paid coverage with that company, I have been receiving many complaints from citizens about this and other medical insurance firms. This is something that the SEC, the Insurance Commission and perhaps Congress should look into as it is affecting many citizens. What's happening is that these companies are too eager to accept insurance payments but concoct all kinds of reasons not to pay claims. Some of them appear to be outright rackets.

* * *

Recently a citizen wrote this column about his unfortunate experience with a medical insurance outfit called Pacific International, which has been operating here for over a decade now without being locally registered. It appears that this firm presented itself in the early '90s as Blue Shield, which it made subscribers believe was part of Blue Cross. The letter-writer and his wife bought coverage at the price of $250,000 each in 1991. Less than a year later, Blue Shield offered them a new lifetime policy coverage for $7,500, making them believe they were both covered for life with no more annual payments to worry about. The writer stressed that curiously Blue Shield never bothered to send them a local doctor to ensure that proper declaration of their medical history was made.

* * *

At some point, however, Blue Shield became Pacific International, this time listed in Samoa and operating out of Hong Kong. But all the while, Filipino subscribers were under the impression that it was represented here at least by the German salesman who sold them the policy. The writer pointed out that Pacific did not pay his claims and unilaterally cancelled his policy due to a technicality and after citing "pre-existing" conditions (this was the same phrase Blue Cross used against Olivares).

The writer stresses that the contract compels him to seek costly arbitration in Hong Kong which could last from one to five years with no sure victory; in a case versus Pacific, he would have to go to a Samoan court. He pointed out that the Dr. Nilo Rosas I mentioned in Olivares' case as the Blue Cross director is the same person who evaluated his case, and whose findings became the basis for Pacific's action not to pay the subscriber's claim and cancel his policy. The firm, stressed the writer, refused to reconsider its no-pay stand despite written certifications of two top Filipino doctors that his condition was not chronic.

* * *

Pacific International is now reviewing this writer's case after having canceled his policy earlier. The only reason is the fact that he accidentally stumbled on copies of a declaration he was supposed to have made, but which turned out to be spurious. He never made such a declaration. So now, not only is this company doing business here even if unregistered and without an office here, it is also into faking subscribers' declarations.

Doctors in various hospitals testify that the medical insurance companies continue to victimize Filipino patients. The writer raises valid questions: what are the SEC and the Insurance Commission doing to such companies that are victimizing perhaps thousands of Filipino subscribers? This is worse than the pyramid scam as it victimizes Filipinos when they are ill and helpless. What about a congressional investigation into the operations of these firms?

Hidden war

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Noralyn Mustafa

'TWAS the night after Christmas and all through Jolo, not a single soul was stirring, not even the Abu Sayyaf, when suddenly a spy plane droned menacingly through the silent sky and made us wonder, like so many times before: When will all these end and we, on this small island, can live our lives with some degree of normalcy?

Of course that won't happen, not until the remaining hostages, the three Indonesian sailors and four women of the Jehovah's Witnesses congregation are retrieved, and their abductors either killed, captured or arrested, or so the government vows.

And now there are speculations that the three Dutch nationals who were thought to have been lost at sea may have been actually sea-jacked and brought here, as usual.

But the military will have to find them first. One would think that for an island that is only some 65 kilometers long and about 23 km at its widest point, that would be quite easy. Yet military authorities themselves will tell you that it is the most difficult thing to do, and not even Predators (what an apt name) criss-crossing over the island night and day will be of any help.

What they have tracked down so far are mostly people who walk like the Abu Sayyaf, talk like the Abu Sayyaf and run like the Abu Sayyaf; a live situational comedy played out in the tradition of the theater of the absurd. Except that it is not funny.

In a published report titled "The Hidden War," the result of a national fact-finding mission jointly conducted by Karapatan (Alliance for the Advancement of People's Rights), the Concerned Citizens of Sulu (CCS) and the Moro-Christian Peoples Alliance (MCPA), participated in by 104 individuals from 23 organizations across the country and abroad, including the network members as well as allied organizations of Karapatan, CCS and MCPA, the figures tell a grim enough story of human rights violations allegedly committed by the military.

Recorded in the report are 50 cases of forced evacuation in 38 barangays (in the towns of Pangutaran, Talipao, Patikul, Panamao and Parang only); 52 cases of divestment of property involving 5,304 individuals, 311 families, 50 households, two communities and one mosque.

Fifty-one cases of destruction of property affecting 5,256 individuals, 311 families, 164 households, one market, two mosques and one school building.

Six cases of harassment involving 2,874 individuals, seven cases of killings with nine victims, four of them children.

Five cases of massacres where 12 persons were killed.

Arbitrary arrest and detention, 14 cases involving 122 men from Patibulan, Panamao.

Two cases of torture inflicted on 97 individuals.

Demolitions, use of civilian houses as detachments; illegal searches and indiscriminate firing add up to the total picture of an undeclared martial law operating in the province of Sulu.

The fact-finding mission was conducted on April 19-23 this year, during the term of Col. Romeo Tolentino as commander of the 104th Brigade based in Jolo.

Yet these are only the documented cases, not even coming to half the number of the undocumented ones.

Last month Congress conducted hearings to confirm, among others, Tolentino's promotion to the rank of brigadier general. Despite objections from Rep. Omar Amin (1st District, Sulu) and former Gov. Abdusakur Tan and others, citing human rights violations during his command, Tolentino got his star because the objectors reportedly failed to prove their allegations beyond reasonable doubt.

Among the Tausugs, personalities like Amin and Tan would tell nothing but the truth in a public forum like a congressional hearing. But in our government structures patterned after Western democratic principles, not even a thousand angels swearing to the fact can make it true without documentation.

But it is unfortunate, a hidden war where the media are effectively kept out of the area of operations and only the Southern Command in Zamboanga City can issue official reports and statements. We can only rely on eyewitnesses and the narratives of persons directly affected by the incidents—that is, if they can be located and are willing to share their stories.

Worse, they are generally averse to having their statements taken down, especially in a venue like a government office, or meeting with a journalist and having their voices recorded. Even note-taking in their presence makes them tense and ill-at-ease. And they don't leave their dead lying around for photo sessions.

Soon after his assumption of the top military post, the new chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines Gen. Dionisio Santiago announced that the Christmas holidays notwithstanding, there would be no let-up in the pursuit operations against the Abu Sayyaf.

At the same time, he echoed the lament of other military officers: it was difficult because "the people refuse to cooperate."

But why on earth should they?

* * *

I was horrified to see a bemoustached, albeit handsome face above my article, "A Mountain of Anguish" the last time, and only when I saw that it was indeed his byline, not mine, below the photograph, did I gain my composure. My apologies to my esteemed colleague, Carlos Zarate, for being made the author of my piece, which is like being convicted of a crime he did not commit. And thanks for putting in a good word for me. With my anguish over such a depressing tragedy of errors, I really needed that.

* * *

Comments to nm19@mysmart.com.ph

Political martyrdom certainly becomes Gloria

COMMENTARY

Dean Jorge Bocobo

TRADITIONAL politics has suddenly become the dirtiest of occupations, degraded to an even lower moral status than ever before, by the single puissant stroke of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's Rizal Day speech, in which she unexpectedly bowed out of the already-roiling 2004 presidential race. It was a victory for *noblesse oblige* on the altar of personal sacrifice that marks an early high point in 21st century Filipino politics and destines Gloria for greater, but as yet, unforeseeable things. For now, the only thing sure is that she will get a lot of unsolicited advice from every pundit and politician reformer who thinks he has the answers to all our woes and she, the means and freedom to implement them. Both would be dead wrong of course and she would be better off charging for listening to such unsolicited advice, to put a dent in the budget deficit.

But certainly, political martyrdom becomes Gloria. If anything, that speech should negate once and for all, the accusation that she was just a spoiled brat before this, an opportunist, into whose undeserving lap the presidency once upon a time fell when Erap's plutocracy imploded and the Supreme Court blessed the civilian-military coup d'état that deposed him. It was a speech that clearly showed Gloria as a person with class, with no inclination to be grasping, ready to give away what mere happenstance gratuitously dropped her way, until a real opportunity to win and deserve one's fortune should present itself.

It also messes up everybody else's plans, schemes and timetables because Gloria has merely decided not to run in the 2004 elections, she has not entered a political nunnery. Not only will she wield considerable power over who gets a crack at the presidency in 2004, she has in fact, extended her own political viability and shelf life. She could still run for the presidency, on her own considerable merit in 2010 or in any conceivable rearrangement due to Charter change, before then. Noble sacrifice or royal blunder, the decision gives Gloria the moral high ground from which to show everyone what she really believes in and what she is really made of. This moral clarity and unequivocal purpose, I hope she will apply to domestic policy in the balance of her term. Her leadership of the country, post 9/11 and the war on terrorism and through all the travails imposed by the Abu Sayyaf, would come to naught if the "outdated social system" which she refers to as preventing our progress as a nation, were to survive much longer into the brave new world of this century.

Conventional wisdom says her withdrawal from the 2004 race opens the door to other candidates. But she's not going away any time soon and the likes of Loren Legarda, Raul Roco, Noli de Castro and other non-opposition aspirants cannot easily ignore the need for her approbation and support, without which it might now be difficult to mount a successful presidential bid. The queen may be more comfortable as kingmaker in a season when political assassins abound and the 2004 race incites the basest passions in other men.

Besides, it is the prospect of opening the door to other ideas and tapping new sources of human energy for saving the Philippines from the Filipinos and the Filipinos from themselves that has been made greater by Gloria's decision.

By putting on Jose Rizal's overcoat of noble personal sacrifice and calling on all Filipinos to do the same, Gloria has issued to her generation, the Filipino baby boomers, a clarion call to public service in the manner of a John F. Kennedy. Many of their number have already been recruited to that enterprise under her administration, which still straddles the generations, but is getting a decidedly younger and younger cast as time goes on. The promising entry of Cito Lorenzo into the Department of Agriculture and Bebet Gozun at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources signals this continuing generational shift under Gloria's reign. They join the other young Filipinos in Gloria's Cabinet to whom the baton is being inexorably passed.

Gloria is certainly assured of a place in that communion of living political saints maintained around Corazon Aquino and vouchsafed by Cardinal Sin, to which she is already being canonized by a crescendo of approving praise for her recent action. This is coming from erstwhile Church, media and civil society allies that had become less than enthusiastic in their support for her this past year or so or have even been alienated from her camp in the series of breakups with the likes of Vice President Teofisto Guingona and former Education Secretary Raul Roco. The quick rebuilding or reaffirmation of her support from these significant sectors has been an immediate windfall of the Rizal Day speech, despite the pestiferous fulminations of self-appointed presidential tormentors and harpies, in the likes of Pastor Saycon and Linda Montayre. The support of these sectors, will be important if she intends to go on a moral crusade to reform the government, fight corruption and save the economy.

What will actually happen depends on the pureness of her intentions and the willingness of the citizenry to do the right thing in the difficult days ahead.

* * *

deanjbocobo@yahoo.com

The Grinch who stole Christmas

READERS' ADVOCATE

Raul J. Palabrica

SOME readers did not take a Christmas break from their self-imposed task of reviewing the pages of the INQUIRER for possible lapses in news reporting.

A proud mother of three children and grandmother of six *apos* from Baguio City, Eufrocinia Vergara, found time between entertaining her loved ones on Christmas Day to write a letter expressing her disappointment with the Dec. 25 issue of the newspaper.

She wrote: "Today is Christmas and it is the happiest day in our Christian life but you chose to spoil this important day with your front-page headline on the death of a mayor and three other people. As if that spoiler news was not enough, you featured as your front-page photo the shanties of the squatters at the South Superhighway in Manila.

"Did you have to ruin our Christmas with that depressing photo and news about the squatters in Manila? After reading your newspaper, my husband and I felt bad and did not feel like enjoying Christmas. I hid your newspaper from my grandchildren because I did not want to spoil their celebration of our family reunion.

"Your newspaper that day was like the Grinch who stole Christmas. Could you not have waited for another day, probably after Christmas, before coming up with that sad photo?

"I know and I sympathize with the problems of the squatters but there is such a thing as *klase-klase*, or to each its own time. I love the INQUIRER but at the rate you have been showing all the bad things in our society during times that we celebrate the coming of our Savior, I may one day decide to stop reading you newspaper if only to maintain my sanity."

Greetings

For the benefit of the readers who may have missed that particular issue, or if they read it they might have already forgotten how it looked, here's a brief description of the complained items.

The Christmas Day edition carried at the top of the front page the words "Mapayapang Pasko sa inyong lahat!" Immediately below that runner at the left-hand side was the picture of a baby boy wearing a crown lying on what looked like red grass. At the other side of the newspaper's ear was the photo of a giant lantern with the silhouette of two young boys beside it.

The banner read, "Blast kills mayor, 3 others." The accompanying story was about a bomb that went off in Maguindanao killing a town mayor and three other people and injuring at least a dozen civilians. The mayor's younger brother earlier died in a shooting incident inside a bar in Cotabato City.

In the middle of the page was a photo, occupying about two-thirds of the page, of the shanties of informal dwellers (that's the politically correct word for squatters) built under a bridge. Human waste and garbage can be seen around the poles on which the houses were built. There was no mistaking the stench and grime of the premises.

The photo caption read: "Try looking for the true meaning of Christmas in this shantytown under a bridge along the South Superhighway near Quirino Avenue in Manila. Bambi Harper visited a slum near Cavite. Like her, you'll be able to relate to the Pope's Christmas message: Give to the poor."

The article beneath the photo described the miserable living conditions of the families who have built their homes under and around a bridge that is used daily by thousands of motor vehicles, including heavy container vans.

Shock effect

I learned that a spirited discussion among the editors preceded the decision to publish the photo and news in question. Those in favor of the publication argued they were meant to remind the readers of the true meaning of Christmas—sharing with the less fortunate. That Christmas is not merely enjoying its spirit in the company of our family and friends, but also with strangers who need our help most. The story was a fitting response to the Pope's call for the faithful to de-emphasize the commercial aspect of the season and focus more on our social responsibility.

The editors who held the contrary view explained that the photo would engender guilt feelings at a time of spiritual renewal. It would assault the senses of the readers without gaining anything positive in return.

The majority of the editors voted to have the items in question published.

I appreciate the purpose behind the publication of the subject news and photo. Indeed, the real spirit of Christmas has been eroded by too much commercialism. Its enjoyment has, sadly, been measured in terms of the number of gifts received or decorations put up.

But did the issue have to be highlighted on Christmas Day? There is a time for everything. Dec. 25 is the most awaited day of the year for most Filipinos, rich and poor alike. It is the time most Filipino families look forward to renew their ties with their loved ones and relatives and enjoy each other's company, oblivious, at least for a day, of the problems that confront us daily during these troubled times.

I share the reader's perception that last Christmas Day the INQUIRER played the role of the Grinch whose mean character cast a bad spell on the Christmas spirit. Couldn't the photo and news have waited for another day? Instead of drawing sympathy, they may have unwittingly achieved the adverse effect.

If the photo showed acts of kindness being rendered to the urban poor in keeping with the true spirit of Christmas, the same message could have been conveyed without unduly impairing the day's joy for many of the readers.

Wrong Ambeth

LAST Dec. 29, the INQUIRER carried the news about the 141 convicts who were given parole by the government in observance of the holiday season. A paragraph in the news reads: "Former gaming official Alberto 'Ambet' Ocampo and priest killer Roberto Manero, who were in the list of 6,000 convicts recommended by prison officials for the traditional holiday pardons, were not among the freed convicts.

A reader called to tell me that the correct name of the former gaming official is Alberto "Ambet" Antonio. He was the person convicted for the death of ex-professional basketball player Arnie Tuadles. The "Ambet Ocampo" sounds like the INQUIRER columnist who writes about religion and history.

The reader is correct. The newspaper unwittingly "convicted" its own columnist of the crime of murder. I can only imagine the chagrin of the relatives and friends of Ambeth Ocampo.

The INQUIRER apologizes for the mistake. It's booboo may be traced to the Christmas hangover, but whatever it may be, it is unacceptable.

* * *

The readers' advocate may be reached at the following address: "The Readers' Advocate" c/o Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, Makati City. Or through fax nos. 897-4793 to 94, or readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph.

Beginning of something good

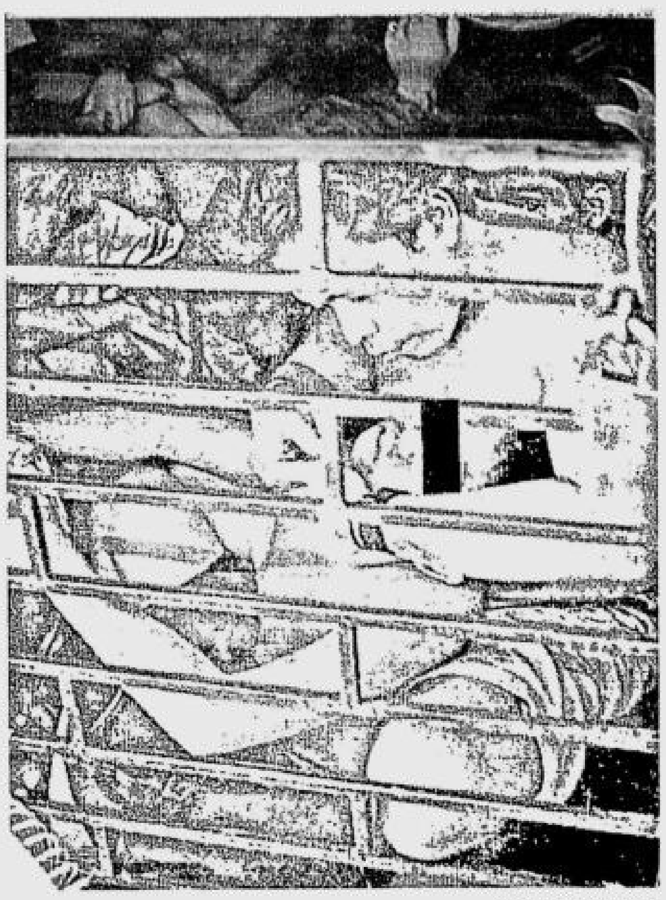
A WELL-KNOWN Visayan congressman once said that, for the country to succeed, all traditional politicians, without exception, himself included should be executed. But nobody would become a mass executioner. The best way is to follow the good example of President Macapagal-Arroyo by not running in 2004.

Our traditional politicians must know that they are the main problem and not the cure or solution to the many problems of our country. And so, like President Macapagal they should make a supreme sacrifice by not running in the 2004 elections.

How about if Raul Roco, FPJ, Ping Lacson, Edgardo Angara, Loren Legarda, Noli de Castro and many others all announce they are not interested in the 2004 elections? Likewise other senators and congressmen should also announce they will not be running. This would be the beginning of something good in 2003 and beyond.

—OSCAR S. LANDICHO,
2 Goodenia Court, Voyager Point,
NSW, 2171 Australia

Consider the children in jail



WHILE the rich politicians are celebrating with parties and pomp the birth of the Child Jesus, they ignore the sub-human conditions of thousands of children in the Philippines who are imprisoned with criminals. This is so unworthy of the Filipino people. The media need to give more investigative coverage to the plight of these children which Newsweek claims to be as many as 20,000.

The government officials live in luxury and are mired in corruption, which you have exposed time and again. Perhaps we can get something done to stop the imprisonment of children. The report is based on visits to 16 prisons, judges and prosecutors and interviews with the children and minors.

Preda has been working in the prisons to rescue children from these horrific conditions as found in some Philippine jails where they are illegally detained in many cases and where their human rights have been seriously violated. Many are innocent and they are victims of a flawed justice system. We are trying to reform the law, known as the Juvenile Justice Bill, stalled in Congress. We are making contributions to this bill to help consolidate the many submissions.

Please open this to the public and help us change things in the Philippines so the future of children at risk will not end in filthy jails and dungeons. We are sharing this letter with our many supporters who will be on the lookout for the coverage.

—FR. SHAY CULLEN,
president, Preda Foundation
(People's Recovery,
Empowerment and Development
Assistance), Upper Kalaklan,
2200 Olongapo City

Why a parliamentary system won't work here

I AM not in favor of instituting a parliamentary system in the Philippines for the following reasons:

1. The parliamentary system has long historical roots in the countries employing it. It is a product of evolution, not an artificial creation of a contemporary decision.

The system has no basis in Philippine history. The brief experiment with the parliamentary system during martial law was a disaster, much like the dictatorship that imposed it.

Most countries using the system were then governed by monarchies. The parliament, conceded by the sovereign to still the restive subjects, initially provided a semblance of check and balance to the monarchy.

Through evolucion or revolution (as what happened in France), the parliament gradually acquired greater powers than the monarch, who remained titular head in deference to the country's tradition.

More importantly, the party system evolved on the basis of support for or opposition to the monarchy.

We can find no such development in Philippine history.

2. The heart and soul of a parliamentary system is the presence of various parties that should be distinguished from one another by clearly defined principles, programs and policies of government.

Adherence and loyalty should be determined by such principles, not by personalities or personal conveniences. Changing of party affiliations is eschewed and fatal to one's political career.

Political turncoats are dime a dozen in the Philippines, where political parties are indistinguishable from most others. Only the Communist Party of the Philippines and its alleged front organizations present a radically different program of government.

The election of the prime minister and the Cabinet by the parliament presupposes that the majority of voters have opted for the party in power because of its program and principles.

3. Elections in a parliamentary system may be held as often as the parliament loses its confidence in the prime minister or as often as he recommends its dissolution to the head of state. In the Philippines, where election is seasonal and anticipated with gusto, that may mean expensive polls every year or more often.

4. Our voting populace generally lacks the political maturity to choose the representatives to the parliament on the basis of party principles and program of government. Given our present whims and caprices, many a deputy will be elected to the parliament and become prime minister because of looks, popularity or name-recall.

5. With the incurable penchant of our political leaders to buy or coerce votes, it will be much easier for one to become and stay prime minister, simply because there are much fewer, no more than 300, electors to convince with bigger largesse.

6. The head of state, exercising purely ceremonial powers but an indispensable component of a parliamentary system, is an alien creature that only a few can understand and appreciate. As previously discussed, such a person, separate and distinct from the head of government, finds no historical root in our country.

There is no need to amend the Constitution merely to accommodate an unworkable system in the country.

As to the proposal of instituting a federal system, that is another issue that I can support.

—ARCHIMEDES S. MARQUEZ,
420 Gov. A. Pascual, San Jose,
Navotas, Metro Manila

NFA transaction maliciously discredited

IN AN ARTICLE by Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. last Dec. 20, 2002, the National Food Authority is allegedly to be rapped for awarding the supply of 10 million empty sacks to a "mere trader" with an initial capital of less than P500,000. It is claimed by Wilfredo A. Paras, chair of the Association of Petrochemical Manufacturers of the Philippines, that if the deal pushes through, it will violate the Flag Law (CA No. 138) which gives domestic entities the preference in the purchase of articles for the government, as the "mere trader" will import the empty sacks to the detriment of local industries.

The allegations are baseless.

The alleged "mere trader," Jodaar Cottage Industries, is a local manufacturer with a capitalization of P10 million. The NFA conducted an ocular inspection of the manufacturing facility in Novaliches, Quezon City last Nov. 6, 2002 and was satisfied with Jodaar's status. Jodaar's sales receipts in 1999 were at least P90 million and P98 million in 2000.

Jodaar has a track record of being a dependable supplier of the NFA. In 2001, Jodaar already supplied 10 million sacks to the NFA and no complaints were received during that time from the other bidders.

More importantly, as admitted in the article, Jodaar won fairly for having submitted the lowest bid in a public bidding. The NFA had an estimate of P71 million while Jodaar submitted a bid of P66.05 million. As Jodaar is a local manufacturer, the Flag Law is not violated in this transaction.

Most of all, the NFA administrator talked to Paras, who supposedly wrote to him as quoted in the article. He vehemently denied he sent the NFA any letter. There seems to be an effort to maliciously discredit the NFA by a certain group whose interests are affected by our measures of transparency and good governance.

—GREGORIO Y. TAN JR.
deputy administrator
for operations, National Food
Authority, Matimyas Bldg.,
101 E. Rodriguez Sr. Ave.,
Quezon City

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LETTERS
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Basis of a government of national unity

TO THE PROPONENTS of a government of national unity, we have one simple question: What is the basis of unity? There seems to be unity about the need for unity—but unity toward what? There is unity and there is unity—but unity around what?

The government of national unity has evolved from an ideal into something nearly real, yet we have not heard of a platform to bind the different parties that will comprise the government of national unity.

A government of national unity forged for sharing power among rival elite factions is utterly useless to the people. It will be a win-win situation for contending camps but a losing proposition for the long-suffering masses.

It is a simplification that too much politics has caused too slow growth in the economy. The country's problem is not an excess of politics but a lack of principled politics. There is too much noise but too little talk about the roots of the economic crisis. There is too little debate about the real causes of mass poverty.

It is globalization that has destroyed the local economy and devastated living standards. Industry and agriculture have collapsed from unfair global competition. The budget deficit has ballooned since the economy has shrunk and tariffs have been reduced. Unemployment is rising and wages are frozen as factories are shut down and contractualization is rampant. It is this that militant labor wants to be discussed and debated.

Militant labor will support a government of national unity whose basis of unity is the defense of our sovereignty and protection against globalization. However, we will oppose a government of power sharing whose platform is more of the same globalization. In such a case, class struggle and not national unity is our response.

—RENATO MAGTUBO,
chair, Partido ng Manggagawa
c/o Fortune Tobacco Labor Union
Central Office, 655 Gen. Ordoñez
St., Parang, Marikina City

Now GMA can be President

SO, President Macapagal-Arroyo will not run in 2004? That is the best gift the President can give the nation and the Filipino people. For she can now be a no-nonsense President.

She can now fly high like an eagle and soar above the jackals and other denizens of the Philippine political jungle who would feast on the carcass of a prostrate and helpless Philippines, which will no longer be as helpless because there is a President who is now above partisan, power politics and who would apply the law equally on friend and foe alike—hopefully with such resoluteness of political will.

A President who would not hesitate to throw the book at anybody, whether friend or foe.

A President who will make crucial decisions in favor of the national interests, regardless of whether such actions will affect narrow vested interests and who can now even boldly say: "to heck with them."

We need a strong republic? We also need a strong President!

A President who will now give a second thought to tying up Philippine foreign policy with US foreign policy. Who will admit there is a big difference between those of powerful foreign interests and the national interests of a small country like the Philippines which should be at peace with all nations.

There is an Unfinished Revolution—as her illustrious father, President Diosdado Macapagal, once said in his time. The struggles of the peasants and intellectuals of 1896 have not yet ended. She should continue the Unfinished Revolution in her time, no matter how limited, so others may correctly follow or continue after her.

In such a context and such changed circumstances, we have every reason to rally behind and support the President of our country (including this citizen who, with due respect, could not accept the legitimacy of her presidency before, I am sorry to say). What people's uprising at Edsa II—or bunkum—are the corporate, social and intellectual elite of imperial Manila talking about? Edsa III—had it succeeded, would have been the true revolt of the masses, the contrary opinion of the Metro Manila elite notwithstanding.

—JUDGE EDMUNDO H.
ESCALANTE (ret.),
Gubat, Sorsogon

Cut population growth, solve economic woes

NOW that she is no longer running for president in 2004, President Macapagal-Arroyo can face our gargantuan population problem head-on without fear of the Catholic Church. If she can arrest our burgeoning population, then I think it is safe to say that half of our economic woes is solved.

If Thailand can do it, why can't we?

—PAUL R. MORTEL,
MBLA Court Malanday,
Marikina City

Man needs science and religion

INSTEAD of being taken as partners and tools to assist humankind to get to the true and the good, science and religion today are wrongly pitted by rationalists as rivals with completely opposed concepts and ends.

Dutch scientist Max Planck alleged light as ions in motion. If it is, how come light can pass through glass panes? Albert Einstein defined light as ethereal. But what is ethereal? The nearest words to ethereal are ghostly and spirit-like. In short, science has its share of unsolved mysteries, just like religion.

In science, we discover and explain, in religion we experience and believe. If set up as a contender to religion, science becomes religion itself with theology. In effect, it shall diminish the real value of each person as a human being with soul. Science without religion, or religion without science, is halfway from the pinnacle of human development and certainty.

Thankfully, great scientists like Einstein and Chesterton, were believers of God. It seems the contrasting notions only exist in the minds of those who are not actually scientists or those who never yet had spiritual encounters.

—JAMES D. FRANCISCO, CFD, 9/F
PNB Financial Center,
President Macapagal Blvd.,
Pasay City

India sets up nuclear weapons command chain

NEWS ANALYSIS

Unni Krishnan

NEW DELHI—India, which came close to war with nuclear-armed neighbor Pakistan last year, put its nuclear arsenal under the control of a formal command chain on Saturday and reiterated its "no first strike" policy.

Indian defense analysts said the move would improve the transparency of the country's nuclear policy and enhance regional stability in South Asia, seen as a nuclear flashpoint because of bitter tensions between India and Pakistan over disputed Kashmir.

The decision by the Cabinet Committee on Security gave the prime minister final power to decide on the use of nuclear arms.

India reaffirmed in a statement its "no first use" nuclear stand but said "nuclear retaliation to a first strike will be massive and designed to inflict unacceptable damage." In an extension of its earlier doctrine, the government added India would "retain the option" of retaliating with nuclear arms in the event of a major biological or chemical weapons attack against India or Indian forces anywhere.

Pakistan, which has fought three wars with India, two over the Himalayan territory of Kashmir, has not ruled out the first use of nuclear weapons, saying it would launch a nuclear strike if its territorial integrity was threatened.

Up to now, India's nuclear arms have been under the control of an informal hierarchy headed by the prime minister. Last April, the government approved in principle a plan for a command structure placing the nuclear button in the hands of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee but no other details were known.

A formal control chain is considered desirable by weapons experts who say it makes it easier to avert an accident.

"Until now, India's nuclear weapons doctrine was seen as more of a draft. There was an ambivalence and the announcement removes that," Uday Bhaskar, deputy director of Institute of Defense Studies and Analysis, told Reuters.

"It enhances regional stability and sends a positive signal."

Pakistan already has its own Nuclear Command and Control Authority made up of military, political and scientific officials with Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf having the final say.

India stunned the world in May 1998 when it held underground nuclear tests that Pakistan quickly followed with copycat blasts.

The Indian statement said nuclear retaliatory attacks could only be authorized by the civilian political leadership through the new Nuclear Command Authority.

The body will be made up of a political council chaired by the prime minister and an executive council headed by the national security adviser that will provide inputs for decisions.

The political council "is the sole body which can authorize use of nuclear weapons," the statement said.

The panel repeated India's commitment to maintain a "credible minimum deterrent." It also approved an alternate command chain in case of "all eventualities" and named a commander in chief to manage strategic forces but gave no details.

India and Pakistan came to the brink of war last year over attacks in India that New Delhi blamed on Pakistan-based Islamic militants fighting its rule in Kashmir. The crisis sparked fears of the world's first conflict between nuclear-armed states.

New Delhi accuses Pakistan of fomenting a 13-year separatist revolt in Kashmir, charges Islamabad denies. Pakistan says it gives moral but no military support to what it calls a legitimate freedom struggle in Kashmir.

Little is known about the number of nuclear warheads the two sides possess. Jane's Strategic Weapons System in London estimates India has 100 to 150 warheads and Pakistan 25 to 50.

In a move coinciding with easing tensions between the rivals, India and Pakistan renewed a 12-year-old agreement on Jan. 1 not to attack each other's nuclear installations and facilities.

Reuters

S. Korea asks Russia help in nuke crisis

SAVING THE PANDA AFP
A nurse holds a 55-day-old panda cub in his arms at the Wolong panda research base in China's southwestern province of Sichuan. Twelve giant pandas were born in captivity in China in 2002 and 10 survived according to state press on Jan. 5

SEOUL—Seoul stepped up efforts to defuse the North Korean nuclear crisis Sunday, with a South Korean diplomat in Russia to lobby for help and officials preparing to present a compromise plan to the United States within days.

South Korea's deputy foreign minister was in Russia—an ally of the North—and talks were slated in Washington early this week among the United States, Seoul and Japan. Seoul's proposal was expected to dominate the three countries' joint strategy session.

On Sunday, the government also announced it will send a high-level envoy to the United States later in the week for more talks on ending the crisis.

Yim Sung-joon, national security adviser, will visit Washington from Tuesday to Thursday to meet his counterpart, Condoleezza Rice, and other White House officials, South Korea's Yonhap news agency quoted the presidential Blue House as saying.

Yim will also visit Tokyo on Friday and Saturday to brief officials there on his US trip and seek ways to strengthen the alliance between the countries.

Japan's Kyodo News agency reported that Japan had already agreed with the United States to use diplomatic pressure in resolving the issue. Japanese Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi and US Secretary of State Colin Powell concurred on the approach during telephone talks late Saturday, Kyodo said.

Details of Seoul's settlement plan were scant, but media reports suggested the proposal would require concessions from both Washington and Pyongyang.

South Korea's deputy foreign minister said Russian assistance was essential.

"Our government thinks that the role of the Russian government in the process of peaceful resolution of this problem is very important and constructive," Kim Hang-kyung told reporters Saturday.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has moved to reinvigorate Moscow's strong Soviet-era ties with North Korea, hosting its reclusive leader Kim Jong-il for the second consecutive year in 2002. Moscow has said it wants to link its trans-Siberian railroad with a railway being rebuilt between North and South Korea.

Seoul's diplomatic offensive underlines its new drive to mediate between its key ally, the United States, and its erstwhile enemy, North Korea. But brokering a deal won't be easy.

The United States refuses to talk until the North scraps its nuclear programs. North Korea insists Washington must take the first step by signing a nonaggression pact promising not to attack the isolated country.

"There is no reason why the US should not accept the proposal, the best way for peaceful solution," the North's state-run news agency KCNA said Saturday. "The present situation is very serious and unpredictable."

Still, officials in Seoul were upbeat about a diplomatic solution.

"We are getting closer to finding an answer," a senior government official said on condition of anonymity after a security meeting Saturday.

In past crises with the North, Seoul played a subordinate role to the United States. Now many South Koreans want their government to help chart the course of talks and assume more equal footing with Washington.

The meeting between South Korea, the United States and Japan—to be held Monday and Tuesday in Washington—is part of the allies' regular forum for coordinating policy toward the communist North. *AP*

Japan denies bid to punish North Korea

TOKYO—A Japanese political leader denied on Sunday that Tokyo would work out punitive measures on its own against North Korea's move to reactivate its nuclear arms program.

"Japan must follow international cooperative moves. It is not that Japan can do something independently," Taku Yamasaki, secretary general of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, said.

"It is necessary to discuss this problem within an international framework led by the six parties," he said in a talkshow on the Japan Broadcasting Corp. network.

The six parties referred to are North and South Korea, the United States, Japan, China and Russia.

Yamasaki was commenting on moves within his conservative party to seek legal measures to retaliate against the North Korean nuclear threat. *AFP*

India sets up nuke command center

NEW DELHI—India, which came close to war with nuclear-armed neighbor Pakistan last year, said on Saturday it had set up a nuclear weapons command system headed by the prime minister.

India will continue its "no first use" of nuclear arms policy but "nuclear retaliation to a first strike will be massive and designed to inflict unacceptable damage," the government said in a statement.

It also said India would "retain the option of retaliating with nuclear weapons" in event of a major biological or chemical weapons attack against India or Indian forces anywhere.

Pakistan, which has fought three wars with India, two over the disputed Himalayan territory of Kashmir, has not ruled out the first use of nuclear weapons, saying it will launch a nuclear strike if it feels its territorial integrity is threatened.

The Indian government approved last April a plan for a command structure with the nuclear button in the hands of the prime minister but gave no details.

India held underground nuclear tests in May 1998 that were followed days afterward by copycat blasts by Pakistan.

Its nuclear program has traditionally been shrouded in secrecy with little known about its command and control system.

The statement, issued after a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security, said nuclear retaliatory attacks could only be authorized by the civilian political leadership through the new Nuclear Command Authority. *Reuters*

Tutu says US an arrogant superpower

LONDON—Archbishop Desmond Tutu on Sunday criticized the United States as an arrogant superpower bent on unilateral action, in an interview on the Iraq crisis to be telecast in Britain.

"I'm shocked to see a powerful country use its power frequently, unilaterally," said Tutu, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 for opposing apartheid in his native South Africa.

"The United States says: 'You do this to the world. If you don't do it, we will do it.' That's sad," he said.

"When does compassion, when does morality, when does caring come in?" he asked. "I just hope that one day that people will realize that peace is a far better path to follow."

Tutu said it was "mind-boggling" that British Prime Minister Tony Blair was strongly backing US President George W. Bush in the showdown with Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.

"Many, many of us are deeply saddened to see a great country such as the United States aided and abetted extraordinarily by Britain," the Anglican archbishop said.

Tutu also questioned why Iraq—which denies it has nuclear, chemical or biological weapon—was being singled out when India and Pakistan are confirmed nuclear powers.

"What do you do with weapons of mass destruction in Europe? What do you do with them in India? What do you do with them in Pakistan?" he asked. "Where do you stop?"

"America should remember that they supported some of the most repressive governments," he said.

"Let's hear what (UN weapons) inspectors get to see. But if you are going to apply as strictly as you want UN resolutions there, you ask why there and not in other places. Why not in Palestine?"

Tutu was interviewed for the Jonathan Dimbleby newsmakers program for broadcast on the commercial ITV television network. Excerpts were released to the British press in advance of broadcast.

Speaking on the same program, former UN Human Rights Commissioner Mary Robinson praised Bush for getting unanimous support in the UN Security Council for Resolution No. 1441, which orders Saddam to give up weapons of mass destruction or face serious consequences.

But she stressed that any future action over Iraq must also be conducted through the Security Council.

TUTU

Otherwise, she said, the results could be "really very serious for stability in a much wider area than just Iraq itself."

"I think the implications would be very far-reaching and very worrying," the former Irish head of state added. *AFP*

Chavez supporters open fire on cops

CARACAS, Venezuela—Gunmen aligned with President Hugo Chavez fired on police officers Saturday after the government accused the Caracas police of killing two people during a melee at an opposition rally a day earlier, the police chief said.

Saturday's shooting increased tensions in Venezuela, where a month-old opposition strike demanding Chavez's resignation has paralyzed oil exports and driven up international oil prices.

The shooting broke out during a wake for one of those slain, Oscar Gomez Aponte, 24. Two officers were wounded while on duty at a small police station next to the Funeraria Valles funeral home in northern Caracas, said Police Chief Henry Vivas.

Vice President Jose Vicente Rangel attended the wake shortly before the attack and claimed the government had a videotape showing city police were responsible for Friday's shooting deaths. The state news agency Venpres also accused Caracas police of triggering Friday's violence.

Gunfire erupted at an opposition march Friday on the headquarters of the armed forces. Military police fired at both Chavez supporters and marchers, and unidentified snipers fired into the crowd.

At least 78 people were injured—five of them from gunfire. Both sides claimed the two dead as their own.

It wasn't immediately clear why Rangel and the state news agency accused police of the shooting deaths. Isaias Rodriguez, the federal attorney general, had said earlier Saturday that an investigation into Friday's violence was just beginning.

Shortly before Saturday night's attack, Rangel said that the police "came here tonight in order to provoke."

"They're trying to blame us for the deaths and I imagine that's what motivated the attack against us," Vivas said.

Vivas said up to 15 people approached the officers and fired automatic weapons. Some of the attackers may have come from the wake after Rangel's appearance; at least one fled back into the funeral home, he said.

Officers returned fire using rubber bullets and tear gas, Vivas said. There were no immediate arrests. *AP*

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*Ayala Center, Cebu (032) 231-5517

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Clonaid claims birth of second cloned human

AMSTERDAM, Netherlands—Clonaid, the company that claims to have produced the first human clone last week, said Saturday a second cloned baby has been born to a Dutch lesbian couple.

Neither baby has been shown to the public or confirmed to be a clone by genetic testing, with DNA identical to that of its mother, and mainstream scientists are skeptical of the company's claims.

Brigitte Boisselier, Clonaid's chief executive and top scientist, told CNN that the girl was born Friday night, but did not to say where. She also did not her name.

Clonaid spokesperson Nadine Gary said earlier that the parents were not in the Netherlands.

"I talked to them just a few hours ago, and they are very, very happy," Boisselier said. "Everything is going fine. And the doctors who have been with the little baby said that everything is fine.

"Imagine how thrilled I am now that there are two and they are perfectly healthy. And probably the second one might be easier for the test than the first one, as you say, there is no proof."

The parents of the first baby Clonaid claims to have cloned—a girl named Eve purportedly born Dec. 26 to US parents—have blocked DNA testing.

Boisselier told The Associated Press Television News on Saturday that the parents had promised to tell her Monday whether they would allow DNA testing to confirm the claim.

Until genetic tests have been done on the babies and their mothers, Clonaid will face a steep uphill battle convincing the world the babies are clones.

"I stick to my word. You will have the tests done whether it's tomorrow or in a week or in a month. They will be done and you will have everything," Boisselier said.

Other scientists have successfully cloned pigs and sheep, but the technology is not reliable. Cloning attempts have a high failure rate, and many animal clones are born with birth defects and abnormalities.

Almost all scientists agree that it is unethical to attempt to clone humans with the technology in its current state, and some doubt Clonaid has the technical ability to do so.

Boisselier is a member of the Raelians, a religious sect that believes beings from outer space created life on Earth.

Rael, the founder of the Raelians, was formerly a French journalist known as Claude Vorilhon. Rael says he created his group in 1973, after meeting an extraterrestrial being who told him that Buddha, Moses, Jesus and Mohammed were all trained by aliens.

Rael founded Clonaid in 1997, after learning that scientists in Scotland had created Dolly, the world's first animal clone.

Cloning of humans is prohibited in the Netherlands under a law passed in September 2002, but the law does not specifically outlaw giving birth to a cloned child. *AP*

Newsman's ties to UFO cult revealed

NEW YORK—A US journalist enlisted by Clonaid to verify the authenticity of its claims to have created the world's first cloned baby tried to sell the story for thousands of dollars to various US broadcasters months before the event, the New York Times reported Sunday.

According to the daily, Michael Guillen, a former science editor at ABC television, had approached several broadcasters months before the cloning announcement to offer exclusive coverage of the event.

Guillen's independence from the religious group affiliated with Clonaid, the Raelians, had been questioned since it became known that he was seeking to sell a documentary on the cloning effort for more than $100,000, according to the Times.

The daily said Guillen proposed a reality-based television program on the cloning effort to Fox Entertainment several months ago, an executive at the company said.

A Fox network executive told the Times Guillen offered to produce the program and to be its host on the air, but Fox declined the offer.

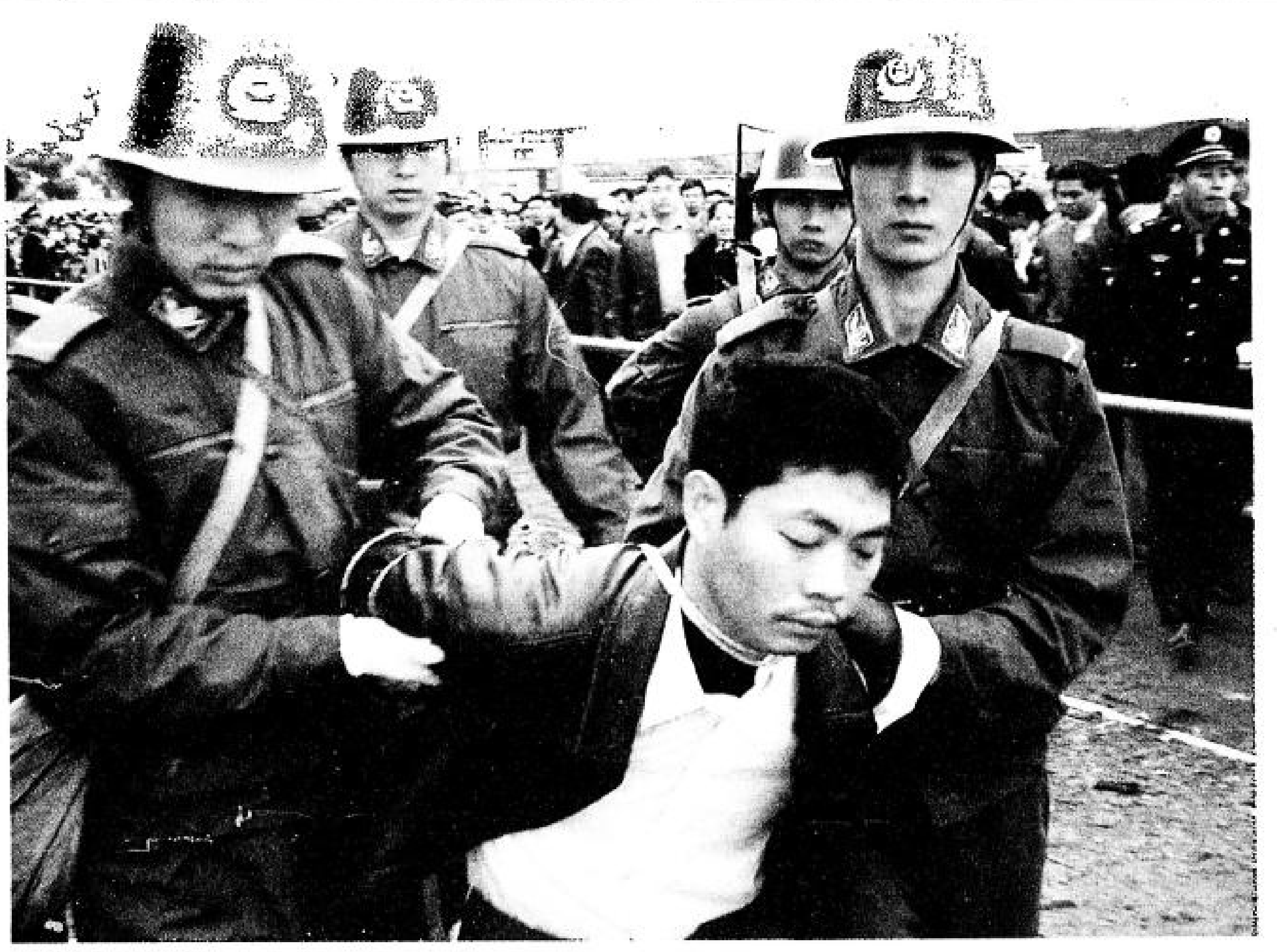
Guillen approached other news divisions and cable companies as well, including ABC, NBC, CBS, CNN and HBO, according to media executives who spoke to the Times.

According to the Raelians, a baby girl dubbed Eve cloned from her 31-year-old US mother was born on Dec. 26 by Caesarian section at a hospital outside the United States.

DNA samples were to have been taken from baby and mother on Tuesday by an independent expert, whose work was to have been supervised by Guillen. Those tests were called off by the group, however, and no definitive proof of the cloning claims has been offered.

The report of Guillen's ties to the Raelians comes as the sect announced on Saturday the birth of the world's second baby clone— again, without offering any proof and deepening a skeptical scientific community's doubts over the claims.

Raelian sect member Brigitte Boisselier, who heads the Clonaid firm that claims to have produced the first human clone, said the second baby was born in northern Europe late Friday to a lesbian couple from the Netherlands. *AFP*



SWIFT JUSTICE AFP

HUANG Hu (center), 29, head of a failed Chinese kindergarten, is taken for his execution at a public rally in Zhanjiang in China's southern Guangdong province, on Jan. 3. Huang was executed after being convicted of poisoning 70 children at a rival school in November after a police investigation into a massive food poisoning at a kindergarten near the city of Wuchuan in Guangdong.

3 in al-Qaida plot face extradition to US

HONG KONG—Two Pakistanis and an Indian-born US citizen in Hong Kong face proceedings beginning Monday to extradite them to the United States on charges that they plotted to swap drugs for anti-aircraft missiles to sell to the al-Qaida terror network.

The men were caught in an FBI sting operation by undercover agents who said the three offered to provide hashish and heroin in exchange for four shoulder-fired Stinger missiles, which experts say would be capable of shooting down civilian jetliners flying at low altitudes.

The hearing before Magistrate Ariana Ching is scheduled for five days. But both sides can appeal, so it could be some time before Hong Kong's leader, Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa, makes the final decision on an extradition.

Little is known about the defendants: Syed Mustajab Shah, 54, and Muhammed Abid Afridi, 29, both of Peshawar, Pakistan; and naturalized US citizen Ilyas Ali, 55, of Minneapolis. They have been jailed here since Hong Kong police arrested them on Sept. 20.

Defense lawyer Jonathan Acton-Bond declined to comment ahead of the hearing.

The men are said to have met in September with undercover FBI agents in a Hong Kong hotel, where they allegedly agreed to sell five tons of hashish and 600 kilograms of heroin, according to an indictment in the US District Court in Southern California.

Before the Hong Kong meeting, Ali allegedly met in April with undercover FBI agents in San Diego, California, to discuss drug deals, the indictment says.

In Hong Kong, the defendants allegedly agreed to take Stinger missiles as payment for the drugs. They also allegedly told the FBI agents they would sell the missiles to al-Qaida.

The men are charged with conspiracy to import heroin and hashish, conspiracy to distribute heroin and hashish and providing material support to a terrorist organization.

The drug charges each carry up to life in prison and fines of $4 million, while supporting terrorists carries up to 15 years and a fine of $250,000.

Hong Kong has no death penalty and its extradition treaty with the United States does not allow for the transfer of defendants who could face execution.

Although the men were caught here, it appeared Hong Kong may have been only a meeting place. There has been no indication that terrorists are operating here, and soon after the three were arrested, leaders of the local Muslim community called them outsiders with no apparent ties to Hong Kong. *AP*

Bush ready to deal with triple threat

CRAWFORD, Texas—US President George W. Bush returns to Washington on Sunday to face down the triple threat of a defiant Iraq, a nuclear-ambitious North Korea and a US economy that refuses to spark.

Ending a 10-day winter break of long walks and brush-clearing, Bush will swap his quiet family ranch in Texas for an intense month at the White House—and he plans to hit the ground running.

"When the president returns, he will continue to work on his priorities for America, which include waging war on terrorism, defending our homeland and strengthening America's economy," White House spokesperson Claire Buchan said.

The month culminates with a UN assessment of Iraq's weapons programs and the president's keynote State of the Union address. But Bush, who has canceled a January trip to Africa to focus on key policies, aims first to tackle the economy with stimulus initiatives worth up to $600 billion.

On Monday, he is scheduled to meet with his Cabinet as he hammers out the details of a plan he will unveil a day later that is centered on tax cuts beyond those enacted in 2001.

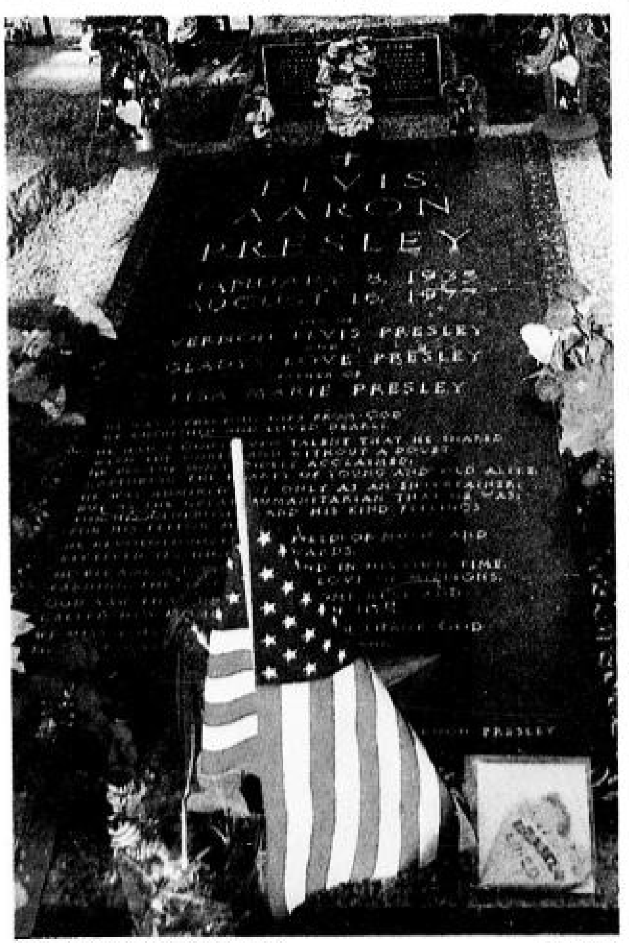
Political analysts say Bush's reelection ambitions could hinge on his economic performance and Democrats are ratcheting up criticism of rising unemployment and falling stock values.

His father, former President George Bush, failed to win a second term mainly because of a sagging economy, despite prosecuting the 1991 Gulf War that was heralded a success.

Bush is also on the offensive on the military front, overseeing an intensifying troop buildup around Iraq.

"This war, like other wars, will not be won on the defensive," he told soldiers at the Fort Hood Army base on Friday. He was referring to the war on terrorism he has linked to destroying President Saddam Hussein's alleged nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programs.

The clock is running down for Bush to decide whether to attack. Military analysts say after February, intense heat makes fighting in Iraq's desert much more difficult. *Reuters*



REMEMBERING ELVIS JOE ARAZAS

Flowers fill the tomb of Elvis Presley as tourists from all over the world visit his Graceland home in Memphis, Tennesee. The birthday of the king of rock and roll falls on Jan 8.

Malaysian women seek curbs on polygamy

KUALA LUMPUR—Malaysia's Muslim men seem increasingly keen on polygamy, just as women's groups are plotting how to curb husbands' rights to as many as four wives.

One politician—a male—is so enthusiastic about the practice that he wants women who allow their husbands to marry a second wife to receive medals of honor.

Women, however, don't seem too keen on the medals.

"We want the legal system to restrict the practice of polygamy," Ruzana Udin, the spokesperson for Sisters In Islam (SIS), told AFP.

But it will be an uphill battle.

The government of northern Perlis state has announced that it will do away with the need to obtain a first wife's written consent to a second marriage to stop men flocking across the border to marry again in less-restrictive Thailand.

The Minister of Women and Family Development, Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, called the move an insult to women.

Another northern state, Terengganu, is preparing to issue legislators with undated letters authorizing them to take another wife at any time.

That idea seems to have left the women speechless with rage, while men who are not elected representatives might be wondering why they are left out of such an easing of the rules.

Although Islamic Sharia laws vary from state to state in Muslim-majority Malaysia, they generally require the signed consent of a man's first wife before he is allowed to take a second.

And while Islam permits a man to marry four wives, he has to prove he has the financial means and ability to treat all wives equally.

Malaysian men often try to escape these strict requirements and get hitched in the Muslim parts of southern Thailand without any such fuss.

If Malaysia's women's groups have their way, however, taking more wives is about to get even fussier.

"We feel that in this day and age, polygamy is no longer necessary," Women's Aid Organization (WAO) executive secretary Ivy Josiah told AFP.

"The Holy Koran allowed it in limited circumstances and contexts. But it is now time to debate its necessity." Some men, such as Johor state legislator Ali Shikh Ahmad who proposed the medals of honor for willing wives, say polygamy helps solve social problems, for example by giving single mothers a chance of marriage. *AFP*

Mahathir's secret to long life–catnaps

KUALA LUMPUR—Malaysia's veteran leader Mahathir Mohamad, who turned 77 last month, said catnaps and moderate food helped him stay healthy, the New Sunday Times reported.

"It's made up of a lot of little things. If there's one, it is moderation in whatever I do. I don't overeat. I don't overstrain myself. No excesses," the prime minister told the paper in an interview.

The doctor also prescribes six hours of sleep a night to Asia's longest-serving leader, said the paper. Mahathir, who has seven children and 15 grand children, is due to retire later this year after 22 years in charge.

Mahathir also catnaps, taking a 15-minute break during the day. "I don't lie down. I just close my eyes and go off for 15 minutes. Then I am back," he said.

"When I travel, people ask me how I can start work immediately upon arrival. I tell them I sleep on the plane.

"In fact, I can get to sleep longer on the plane than on the ground as nobody disturbs me. In 12 hours of flying, I will sleep for 10," he said.

Mahathir said he would go to bed between midnight and 1 a.m.

Party matters keep him awake sometimes, he said, "but I must admit I am able to sleep quite easily. I very seldom keep awake at night."

Mahathir has his foibles too. His aides told the paper that the prime minister hated having his hair cut and nails manicured.

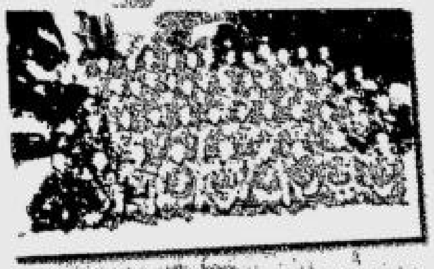
"He hates it because he has nothing to do while he sits there," says Sufi Yusoff, Mahathir's assistant press secretary. *Reuters*

MAHATHIR

Isang
Taos-Pusong

Pasasalamat

The Philippine Marine Corps
505 Search & Rescue Group, Philippine Air Force



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Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

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ROUNDUP

Med equipment destroyed

CLARK FIELD, Pampanga—A group of men broke into a warehouse here on New Year's Eve and destroyed P31 million worth of medical equipment. Scott Nelson, vice president of Kosmic Clark Medical Co. Inc., said the intruders did not steal anything but smashed two units of CT scanners, three ultrasound diagnostic machines, and six fluoroscopic X-ray machines with the use of heavy tools or objects.

Jun Malig, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Ketchup truck seized

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Seven armed men seized a 10-wheel truck loaded with hundreds of boxes of ketchup worth P250,000 on MacArthur Highway in Barangay Telabastagan here early Monday. Truck driver Mario Aberar told police that the suspects were on board a van and ordered him and his two helpers to alight. Aberar and his companions were herded to the van and dumped near the boundary of Magalang, Pampanga, and Concepcion, Tarlac. On Dec. 14, seven armed men also hijacked a trailer van in Apalit town.

Jun Malig, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Water facility bombed

BAYAMBANG, Pangasinan—A pumping station of the Bayambang waterworks system in Barangay Nalsian Norte here was destroyed after a group of men threw a hand grenade during the New Year's Eve revelry. Supt. Arturo Cacdac, provincial police director, said the steel gate, walls and ceiling of the Don Miguel Matabang pumping station were destroyed. *Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Fire kills woman

BAGUIO CITY—A woman was killed and four others, including children, were seriously injured Wednesday night when a one-hour fire razed a new market in Tinoc, Ifugao, police said. Marcela Pindog died at the Baguio General Hospital while undergoing treatment for serious burns. Her son Albodi and grandchildren Jandy, 6; Janice, 4; and Jovie Anne, 2; suffered burns when their gas tank exploded at 7 p.m. Damage to property was placed at P2 million.

Gerriahzon Sebastian, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Village leader killed

CEBU CITY—A barangay councilor was killed while his wife was injured in a road accident at the Cebu Trans-central Highway around 1:30 p.m. on New Year's Day. Barangay Councilor Rommel Gonzaga, 36, of Calamba, this city, died on the spot when he was thrown off his motorcycle and hit a road railing. His wife Rosalita, 40, had an arm fracture. The couple was returning to the city from Balamban on board a motorcycle driven by Rommel at high speed along a slippery road when the accident happened.

Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau

1 dies in road mishap

CEBU CITY—One person was killed while six others, including a pregnant woman, were injured in a road accident on Thursday in Argao town, 86 kilometers south of this city. Ruben Antonio, 30, of Toledo City, a conductor of JCM passenger bus, which was parked in a nearby waiting shed in the town proper to pick up Romana Mamites, 46. Reports said that the passenger bus BB Gemma, which came from Dalaguete town, Cebu, lost its brakes and hit a multi-cab at about 6 p.m. The bus then hit Antonio and Mamites before it rammed into a car.

Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau

Boat passengers rescued

CEBU CITY—Seventy passengers and six crewmembers were rescued on Thursday after the motorboat they were riding in from Bohol developed engine trouble in the waters off Punta Engaño Waters, Lapu-lapu City, Mactan Island. MB Eagle Express, which is owned by Glicer Omolon of Look, Mandaue City, left the port of President Garcia, Bohol at about 9 a.m. and was expected to dock at Barangay Look, Mandaue, at about 2 p.m. At about 12:15 noon, the motorboat's engine stopped when skipper Sergio Ebañez tried to slow down. He said the battery might have been defective. Ebañez said he called Omolon through his cellular phone and the owner sent another motorboat, the Reniel Cruiser, which towed the vessel to port.

Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau

Blast injures fisher

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—A man who was trying to split an explosive to be used for dynamite fishing ended up in a hospital. Supt. Willie Dangane, Sarangani police director, said Pablo Nani, 42, a fisherman and a resident of Barangay Tinoto in Maasim, Sarangani, was injured when the explosive went off. The blast also slightly injured Zorayda Sablaya, 13, the fisherman's neighbor.

Aquiles Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Drug suspect arrested

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Agents of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) arrested an alleged notorious drug pusher, along with at least two minors, during a buy-bust operation in Barangay Labangal here. Supt. Efren Alculzar, PDEA 12 chief, said the raiding team seized at least 7.5 grams of methamphetamine hydrochloride or shabu from Amba Hadjullah, 42, and the two other suspects. Alculzar said Hadjullah had previously been arrested on drug charges and is out on bail. Hadjullah denied that the illegal drug was seized from him.

Aquiles Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Army battalion chief, 3 others hurt in ambush

By Aquiles Z. Zonio
PDI Mindanao Bureau

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Four soldiers, including a ranking military official, were wounded when about 20 heavily armed men waylaid them in Barangay Palian on the outskirts of Tupi town in South Cotabato on Saturday afternoon.

The military official was identified as Lt. Col. Eduardo Andes, battalion commander of the Army's 27th Infantry Battalion based in Kablon, Tupi.

Andes suffered a single bullet wound in the back, but an attending doctor at a hospital in Koronadal town declared him out of danger.

The other casualties were identified Pfc. Johnny Sinaon, Sgt. Pablito Canja and Sgt. Patriarch Hitalia.

Col. Nestor Ochoa, deputy commander of the Army's 601st Infantry Brigade, told reporters here that Andes was leading two teams of soldiers to Barangay Tubing at around 2:15 p.m. on Saturday to verify reports of the presence of several armed men when they were attacked.

Ochoa said Andes' men managed to fire back, but the attackers quickly withdrew and fled to a nearby jungle.

He said the military was still investigating the incident to determine the identity of the group responsible for the ambush.

Ochoa said communist rebels could be behind the incident.

The New People's Army operating in the South Cotabato-Sarangani-General Santos (Socsargen) area had earlier vowed to launch more tactical offensives against the government.

As this developed, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) denied role in the ambush.

Eid Kabalu, MILF spokesperson, said such an atrocity would be a violation of the ceasefire agreement that the rebel group signed with the government.

Davao execs demand apology from paper for terror report

By Ayan C. Mellejor
PDI Mindanao Bureau

DAVAO CITY—A Singapore Straits Times (STI) report, quoting a ranking Indonesian police official, that terrorists were trained in this city has incensed local officials, some of whom demanded that the newspaper come out with an apology.

However, Councilor Peter Lavina said terrorists might have actually used the city as transit point for urban training, center for surveillance, communication and assassination.

Lavina instead urged the police and the military to check on the STI report which came out on Jan. 2 and posted on its online edition.

"The report is serious and authorities should look into it," he said.

Councilor Bonifacio Militar said the report was giving the city a bad image.

"Maybe we should invite the attention of those who made the report. It is alarming . . . it (is) bad for the City of Davao," Militar said.

The STI quoted Brig. Gen. Jhom Lalo, chief of the North Sulawesi provincial police, as saying that terrorists from his country used the islands in Sangihe Talaud District, which is north of Manado, as a gateway for their training "in the Philippine City of Davao."

"It's true the district on the border with the Philippines has become an entry and exit point from Indonesia after the terrorists finish training in Davao," Lalo was quoted as saying.

He did not name which group trained the alleged terrorists or where in the city they actually trained.

Militar rejected the report, saying the people of Davao should be the first to know about any terrorist activities.

Vice Mayor Luis Bonguyan said the STI should correct its report.

"That is an unfair comment. I don't know why it came out that way," Councilor Emmanuel Galicia agreed.

The city, despite terrorist threats in other parts of Mindanao, has remained peaceful.

Officials credited Mayor Rodrigo Duterte's diplomatic approach with rebel groups and the heavy security implemented in and out of the city for the absence of any disturbance here.

GenSan terror watch

In General Santos, security measures have been tightened in and around the city following the discovery of a hollow grenade at the vicinity of a gasoline station in Barangay Calumpang yesterday morning.

Residents are still suffering from trauma following the April 21 bombing inside a mall that killed at least 15 persons and the series of explosions that occurred after it.

Senior Supt. Jorge Aquisap, acting city police director, told reporters that the grenade that was found had no explosive content.

The grenade, which was discovered by a resident, was tied to an electric post near one of the gasoline stations in Calumpang.

Aquisap said the suspect had apparently wanted to sow terror and spoil the city's relative peace and order condition.

Even if the grenade was only intended to scare, Aquisap said the police were not taking chances, especially with the carnival going on. The fair was part of the city's Christmas celebration and will end on Jan. 6 yet.

Aquisap said he had already coordinated with the Army's 601st Infantry Brigade to beef up security in the city.

Aside from posting policemen in conspicuous areas, Aquisap said foot patrols were also being conducted. *With a report from Aquiles Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

More chilly days ahead in Baguio

By Frank Cimatu
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—The mercury in this mountain resort city keeps on dropping and weather observers predict that residents and tourists would enjoy more chilly days this month.

On Thursday, the city registered its lowest temperature—at 10.2 degrees Celsius—since January 2002. The coldest temperature recorded here last year was 8.8 degrees Celsius on Jan. 4.

Pedro Rigos, weather observer at the Baguio station of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa), said they are expecting temperature in the city to drop to about 9 degrees Celsius in the next few days.

The temperature slightly rose to 10.8 degrees Celsius on Friday and 11.4 degrees Celsius on Saturday, Rigos said.

But 2002 cooler

The year 2002 in the country's summer capital was actually cooler than average, belying the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) report that the past year was the second hottest year in 160 years since measurements were taken.

Raw data from the Pagasa Baguio station from Jan. 1 to Dec. 26, 2002 showed that the average temperature was 19.63 degrees Celsius, lower than the average of 19.8 degrees Celsius from 1961 to 2001.

Baguio was cooler than average from May to September, but December was the hottest since 1998. The mean temperature in December was 19.34 degrees Celsius, or a degree higher than average at 18.3 degrees.

2003 hotter, drier?

In fact, 2003 may be one of the hottest and driest for Baguio in recent years.

This indicates the onset of the El Niño phenomenon.

The WMO said 2002 replaced 2001 as the hottest year in the century, second only to 1998 as the hottest ever in 160 years.

According to the WMO, temperatures recorded through late November 2002 were a half-degree higher than the annual average from 1961 to 1990.

El Niño last appeared in early 1998 and the late months of 1997.

In a report, Aida Jose, weather services chief of Pagasa's climatology and agrometeorology branch, said El Niño is characterized by drier-than-normal weather conditions that can last for one or more seasons.

"These dry weather conditions are caused by suppressed tropical cyclone activity in the western equatorial Pacific and weak monsoon activity characterized by the delayed onset of the rains, monsoon breaks and an early termination of the monsoon season," Jose said.

Only traces of rain

In Baguio, total rainfall in December 2002 was only 2.8 millimeters.

Rainfall in December 1999 to 2001 averaged 44 mm.

In 1997, when the effects of El Niño were felt in the country, there were only traces of rain in Baguio. Following that El Niño season, there were only traces of rain in January 1998, 4.4 mm in February 1998, traces in March 1998 and 32.31 mm in April 1998.

Most of the rains in April 1998 were caused by cloud seeding activities, Pagasa reports said.

Rainfall normalized only in May 1998 where 220 mm was recorded.

Typically, Baguio City, Eastern Samar and Eastern Surigao get the greatest amount of rainfall, while the southern portion of Cotabato receives the least amount of rain, Pagasa records show.

"During El Niño, the annual water inflows in major reservoirs are significantly decreased. This is consistent with the observed low annual rainfall over the basins. Worsening decreases in inflow inevitably lead to curtailment in the domestic water supply and irrigation requirements, thus causing water rationing in many residential areas and the reduction in irrigated farmlands," Jose said.

El Niño is especially stressful for Baguio, a traditional tourist destination, because it relies on rainfall for its water requirements. Eighty percent of the city's foreign and domestic tourists arrive from November to May, when there is little rain falling on the city.

Moderate El Niño?

The International Research Institute (IRI) for Climate Prediction said there is nearly a 100-percent probability that El Niño conditions will continue into the first two to four months of 2003.

"It is likely that this will be a moderate El Niño, but significantly less strong than the 1997-1998 episode," the United States-based IRI said.

Sea surface temperatures across much of the central equatorial Pacific (including the Philippines) will increase by more than a degree Celsius and may exceed two degrees Celsius by April.

There is a 50- to 60-percent probability that temperatures will be higher than normal in the Philippines from February to March 2003 and a 40-percent probability that it will be hotter than normal from April to June 2003, IRI said.

According to IRI predictions, the probability of rains will be 40 percent lower than normally expected from January to April 2003 in Northern Luzon, about 45 percent lower for Eastern Mindanao and about 50 percent below normal for Western Visayas and the rest of Mindanao.

Most of the Philippines, except perhaps for northwestern Mindanao and nearby islands in the Visayas, will have a 40-percent chance of having less than normal rainfall from April to June 2003, IRI reported.

"Environmental impacts (of the El Niño) include soil degradation, changes in water quality due to saltwater intrusion and a high risk of forest fires," said Jose.

Among the social impacts of El Niño, she said, are the "disruption of normal human activities, migration to urban communities and human and health problems brought about by the scarcity of water."

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo and her husband, First Gentleman Mike Arroyo, relax after a round of strawberry-picking at the La Trinidad strawberry farms in Benguet. Joining them is a friend of their son Dato.
TOOTS SOBERANO

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Diarrhea kills Manobo child; 73 hospitalized

By Ayan Mellejor and Franklin Caliguid
PDI Mindanao Bureau

DAVAO CITY—A Manobo child died while 73 others were downed by diarrhea in Barangay Malamba in Marilog District here.

As of yesterday, seven more people were brought to the Davao Medical Center (DMC) here for treatment of the same ailment.

Dr. Roberto Alcantara, city health officer, said the dead child was immediately buried. Authorities were not informed whether the child was a boy or a girl.

As of yesterday, 10 of the victims have remained at the DMC.

Alcantara said his office would be sending a team to the village to gather water samples. This would help authorities determine what triggered the disease, he said.

But Alcantara ruled out the illness as a symptom of cholera.

The lack of source of potable water could have triggered the diarrhea outbreak, he said.

In Santiago, Agusan del Norte, eight people mostly children were killed and 37 others were hospitalized due to measles as of end-December.

Rudy Arap, National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP) field officer in Santiago, said the number of those affected by the disease was expected to increase because the Mamanwa women and elders have refused treatment and vaccination for their children.

"They want to resort on their own tribal way of treatment," Arap told the INQUIRER.

He said the airborne disease was discovered on Dec. 23 and had already affected at least five remote barangays in the area.

The regional health office ruled out an outbreak.

Annabelle Sabornido, information officer of the Department of Health in Caraga, said the number of recorded cases was not alarming.

"There is no outbreak, just an increase in the number of cases," she said.

Drive vs abusive cops pushed

LINGAYEN, Pangasinan—The days of abusive and corrupt policemen here are numbered, according to the provincial police chief.

The police hierarchy will go after the "ABKD," which means "Abusado, Bastos, Kutong or Kurakot and Di kanais-nais na Pulis" (Abusive, Ill-mannered, Bribe Taker and Undesirable), said Senior Supt. Arturo Cacdac.

Cacdac said 2 percent of 110,000 policemen in the country were considered "misfits and scalawags" who give a bad name to the organization.

"Since they are undesirable in the force, their peers and the public will not miss them if they are dismissed from the service," he said.

Cacdac said the anti-ABKD campaign was a "relaunching" of the Patnubay program of the Department of Interior and Local Government, which aims to rid the police force of scalawags.

"Policemen are public servants and not masters of the people, and all of us in the force must put that in mind," he said. "The police must always be polite, ready to serve when asked for assistance, and never remiss in their duties."

The program not only punishes those who neglect their duties but also commends and rewards those who are deserving, he said.

Under the program, 92 cases were filed against policemen in Pangasinan last year. Fourteen officers were charged in court, nine were reprimanded and one was suspended for 180 days for neglect of duty.

Seventy-six non-commissioned officers were charged. Twenty-six of them were suspended while nine were dismissed. *Yolanda Fuertes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

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Kin of slain wife of cult leader long for justice

By Jolene R. Bulambot
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—A year after her badly bruised body was discovered inside a garbage bag and dumped off a road in the southern town of Dalaguete, the family of Alona Bacolod Ecleo continues to grieve over her death and to long for justice for the gruesome killing blamed on her cult leader husband, Ruben Ecleo Jr.

Alona, wife of the "supreme master" of the Philippine Benevolent Missionaries Association (PBMA), grabbed the headlines after her brother, Ben, tagged her husband, a former mayor of San Jose, Dinagat, Surigao Del Norte, as prime suspect in the most sensational case in Cebu last year.

Alona had several wounds and bruises all over her body when she was discovered days after her disappearance on Jan. 5, 2002.

Ben, who could have been the prosecution's vital witness for his testimony linking Ecleo to his sister's death, was also murdered, together with their parents Elpidio and Rosalia and sister Belen, five months after Alona's death.

During yesterday's commemoration of Alona's first death anniversary, her remaining siblings—Nino, Jocebel, Ricky and Chlea—went to visit her grave at the Cebu South Memorial Park in Talisay City and offered Mass for her.

Clad in black shirts and jeans, the surviving Bacolods silently prayed for their slain family members while being closely guarded by at least 10 police personnel from the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group.

The four siblings have been in the custody of the CIDG in Central Visayas since after the massacre of their parents and two other siblings on June 18.

PBMA member Rico Gumolon fired an Ingram machine pistol at the Bacolod family members while they were resting outside their house at Sitio Pinahagbong, Barangay Subangdaku, Mandaue City, Cebu. Gumolon was later shot dead by pursuing policemen.

Ricky, in his speech after the Mass, expressed frustration over the snail-paced prosecution against his brother-in-law. He was hopeful that after Ecleo's conviction, they would live normal lives again.

He also urged PBMA followers to stop bothering them and leave them in peace.

"It is sad to note that with the gruesome killing of my sister, my parents and two siblings have to die also and yet no case has been filed against their murderer. I urged the PBMA members to leave us alone, stop chasing us and those who have helped us," Ricky said in Cebuano.

Lawyer Arbet Yongco, the Bacolods' private prosecutor, was also dismayed over the slow progress of their case pending before the regional trial court of Cebu.

Yongco said the Supreme Court had already ruled that Ecleo's parricide case would be tried in Cebu, but the cult leader has not even been arraigned yet.

She said the Bacolods, together with the Crusade Against Violence, a group helping the victims of injustice and violent crimes, have been pushing for Cebu RTC Executive Judge Galicano Arriesgado from handling the case.

Yongco said they wanted a judge who is not only impartial but who is not afraid to render fair justice.

"This is not an ordinary case. The accused here is not only wealthy but (also) influential. We hope that we can gain justice from their deaths," she said.

The INQUIRER tried to get Ecleo's comment but the latter refused an interview. The cult leader has been detained at the Bagong Buhay Rehabilitation Center since June 21, two days after the bloody police siege at the fortified Ecleo mansion, also the PBMA headquarters, on Dinagat Island that left 18 PBMA members dead and forced Ecleo to surrender.

LONDON KILLING

Nurse's murder robs quiet family of peace of mind

By Juan Escandor Jr.
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

SAN JOSE, Camarines Sur—On Dec. 6, Debbie Remorozo, a Bicolana nurse from Barangay Kinalansan, this town, called her parents from her flat at Old Ham, five kilometers from London, to inform them of the good news—she was promoted to Nurse 2 after working for a year at the Royal Old Ham Hospital.

Debbie's excitement, as well as her parents', was short lived. Two days after she broke the news, she was found dead with several stab wounds in her flat.

Her remains arrived here on Wednesday through the help of the Philippine Consulate in London.

Her parents, Dionisio and Alicia, are still inconsolable and can hardly sleep. The grief-stricken couple wished that God could show them the reasons for the tragic death of their daughter to regain the peace of mind that an unidentified murderer took from them during the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

Philippine Consulate officials in London immediately did everything to bring back Debbie's body at the soonest possible time. Their quick action somehow eased the grief of the Remorozos.

Dionisio said the officials did not leave any stone unturned, from crime investigation and autopsy to the vigils and the transport of Debbie's body.

He was especially thankful for the help of labor attaché Victor Julio Ablan, who closely coordinated and updated them by cell phone on the developments of the case while the body was still in London.

When the body arrived at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport, many officials sent their condolences, including President Macapagal-Arroyo who gave a letter of condolence that until last week the family had yet to open.

Dionisio said they had no time yet to open letters of condolences and planned to read them after the burial.

The Remorozos said interment will be on Wednesday afternoon.

Proud parents

The parents were silently jubilant at the way their daughter's career was going in a foreign land and thanked God for the blessings. They praised God for answering their prayers to keep their daughter away from harm.

Two days later, Dionisio answered a cell phone call at about 6 a.m. from a certain Claro Conde, a Filipino priest doing services in Old Ham, who was asked to contact the Remorozos.

What Conde had to tell them was a very sad news about their daughter.

In an instant, the peace and tranquility in their minds were shattered and the once happy family will never be the same again. The world around them seemed to collapse 17 days before Christmas.

Debbie, 26, was found on the sofa, clutching a throw pillow and drenched with blood, by a Filipino nurse, a co-worker at Royal Old Ham Hospital.

Hospital authorities had sent her co-worker to check Debbie in her flat after she failed to report for duty at 7 a.m. and nobody was answering her cell phone which just kept on ringing.

Before Conde could even tell some of the details of the tragic fate of Debbie, Alicia, the victim's mother, passed out.

"I cannot comprehend how this tragic fate of my daughter can befall on us. After all these years, we have tried hard to be good and could not even remember that I had committed serious wrongdoings to deserve such fate and pain," Dionisio said, his eyes welling.

Trying hard to understand what could be God's plan and why they should be confronted with a very painful trial, he said he hoped they would be able to overcome the brutal death of their daughter and achieve peace of mind.

Alicia did not talk about the pain but could only shed more tears as she watched the coffin in front of her.

Loving daughter

Dionisio said Debbie was sending them money as her share for the completion of their two-story house. He said he did not pressure his daughter to do so.

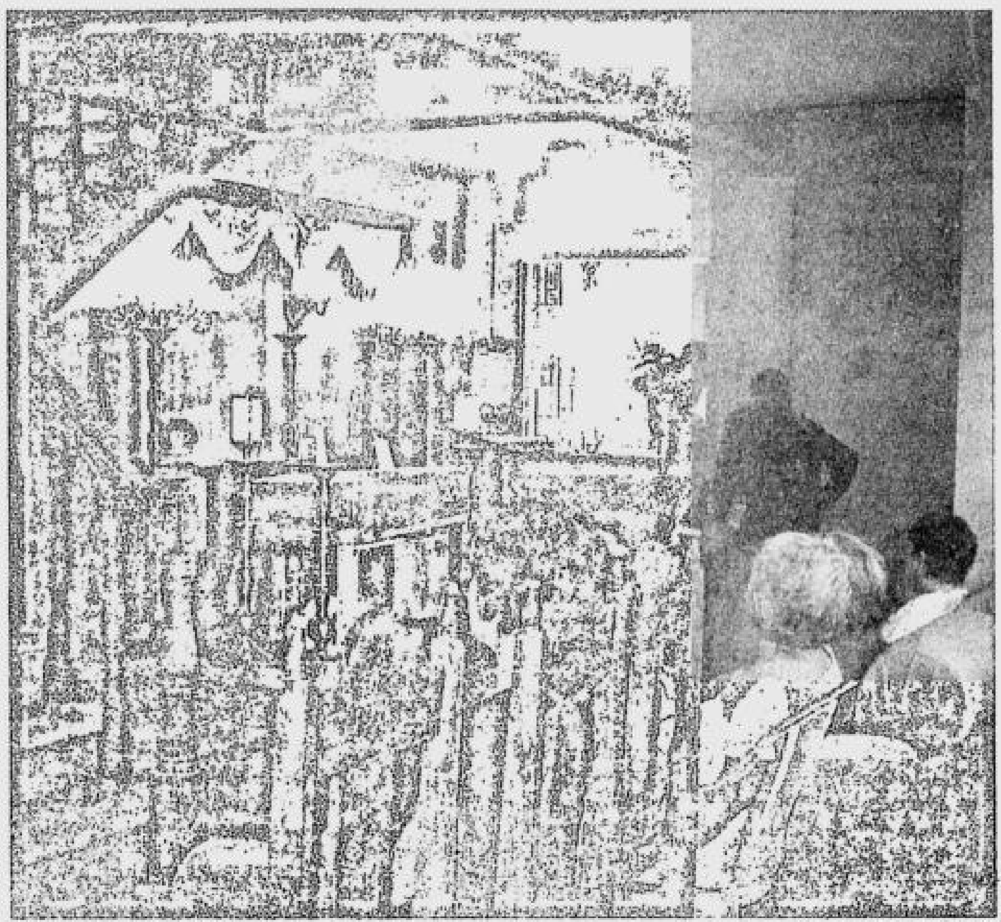
Dionisio farms and is engaged in business, whose earnings are enough for their children to meet their basic necessities. His wife works as principal in the barangay school.

The couple was able to send all their four children to college. Debbie was the third among the Remorozo siblings and the darling in the family.

Debbie finished her elementary, high school and college education in Catholic schools that made her very religious.

"I feel very deep pain every time my mind wanders and imagines the pain and fear Debbie had gone through while trying to protect herself on the last minutes of her life," Dionisio said.

He said Debbie was a petite young lady at five feet tall and could be easily overpowered. He said she might have been very helpless when the murderer started stabbing her and her only shield was a throw pillow.



THE BODY of slain Filipina nurse Debbie Remorozo arrives at her home in San Jose, Camarines Sur.

'Debbie was a very quiet, kind person'

NAGA CITY—A teacher and clinical instructor of a Filipino nurse found murdered in a flat in Manchester district in London can only pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Debbie P. Remorozo, 26, added up to the growing list of overseas Filipino workers who lost their lives abroad in search of greener pasture.

Remorozo's mentor at Universidad de Santa Isabel (formerly Colegio de Sta. Isabel) remembered her to be a very quiet person, kind and caring to her patients.

Elizabeth Azutillo, one of her clinical instructors, said it was disheartening that her student met a tragic fate in a foreign land while working hard for her family's future.

Azutillo said an Isabeliña or an alumnus of Santa Isabel broke the news of the violent death of Remorozo during a telephone conversation on Dec. 10.

A certain Helen Agar, an Isabeliña from Batch '98, informed her that although they did not see body, the victim's former buddy in the flat had detailed to them what she saw, Azutillo said.

Agar had told Azutillo that Remorozo was still clutching a throw pillow to her chest as if to ward away his attacker and protect herself.

Remorozo was found sprawled in the living room of a flat in Manchester with stab wounds in the neck and chest on Dec. 8.

On Dec. 7, several alumnae staying at Birmingham and Remorozo's unnamed former buddy called her several times after she failed to report for duty.

Her friend still had the key to the flat because they had not yet to use up the deposit and advance rentals to the flat.

Manchester District, which Filipino nurses here considered unsafe to live, is a multiracial area in London where crimes often happen, Agar told Azutillo.

Agar also told her former clinical instructor that Remorozo had planned to transfer to a safe place after she had used up their rentals.

Azutillo said her former student was saving money and had been doing overtime work at the hospital for her homecoming and transfer to the United States.

She said they regretted that they could not do anything to help her family but to pray for her. *Juan Escandor Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Mindoro family turns to prayers to find missing farm laborer

By Madonna T. Virola
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

CALAPAN CITY—"This was our saddest Christmas because my youngest son is missing," said Victor Nazarro, father of Apolonio or Balong who was allegedly "invited" for questioning by military officers on Dec. 6 and has not since been heard of.

The most disturbed in the family, Victor has lost weight.

Before his disappearance, Balong helped his 63-year-old father in the farm. Balong is single but acts as breadwinner to the family of his sick brother, while supporting his two young nieces.

According to his relatives, Balong was summoned by Army soldiers stationed in Sitio Morangan, Barangay Alcate, Victoria, Oriental Mindoro, for interrogation because he was being suspected of being a supporter of the communist New People's Army.

Martin Buding, a barangay councilman in Alcate, visited Balong in his house at around 2:30 p.m. of Dec. 6 and informed him that a certain Sergeant Paman wanted to talk to him.

Marites Nazarro, Balong's sister-in-law, witnessed and heard their conversation.

In fact, before leaving, Balong requested her to cook rice because it was already noon he wanted to eat when he returned after the meeting.

Balong did not come back. After he was brought to the military camp, he has not been seen again by his relatives nor has there been any information as to his whereabouts.

Worried

On Dec. 7, Marites got worried about Balong's not coming home at night. She went to Buding to ask him where her brother-in-law was brought.

Buding informed her that he accompanied Balong to the camp and left him there with Paman.

She said she was told that he did not know why Balong was not able to go home.

Marites later informed her sister-in-law, Aurea "Nene" de Chavez, and her father-in-law about Balong's disappearance. Together, they went around in what seemed to be a futile search. They proceeded to the military camp and asked Paman about Balong.

The sergeant admitted to having called Balong for interrogation, but he insisted that he released him by 6 p.m. that same day.

Police help

Neighbors confirmed that they saw Balong and Buding enter the camp, but they did not see Balong leave.

On Dec. 8, Balong's father, his brother Protacio and his wife Marites, went to the headquarters of the 204th Infantry Brigade in Sitio Curva in Naujan town to plead for their intervention. They were accompanied by their barangay chair, Osias Largado.

Balong's relatives reported that Largado was able to talk to Col. Juanito Gomez, who assured them, through Largado, not to worry, as Balong would come back.

On Dec. 9, they went to the Victoria town police to seek assistance. They were informed that Largado had already reported the incident and had it recorded in the blotter.

The next day, police investigator Henry Malitao summoned Largado and Buding to a dialogue. Balong's relatives, Largado and Buding were joined by Paman, with four soldiers accompanying him in civilian clothes.

However, the military did not enter Malitao's office but stayed outside and waited.

The meeting accomplished nothing, for Buding kept on insisting that he had left Balong with Paman and did not know what happened next.

When they were about to leave the police station, Balong's family passed by the group of the soldiers and it was Paman who consoled them, saying in Filipino: "Don't worry, he is in good hands. We will return him to you!"

Upon hearing this, Marites contemptuously commented: "So you know where he is. Why do you still allow us to keep on searching?"

Marites said Paman kept silent and did not continue the conversation.

Prayer

Completely at a loss where to find help, Balong's sister, Aurea "Nene" de Chavez, in desperation, wrote a supplication letter to the Virgin Mary asking for her intercession.

The prayer-letter, which reads in Filipino, says in part:

"We no longer know what to do, especially our father who cannot eat and sleep. As for myself, who is a sister, I am very worried ... Please help us pray to our Holy Creator and our Mother of Mercy to allow our brother to return safe ..."

The prayer was placed in front of Mary's statue in the Good Shepherd Parish Church in Victoria. It was eventually found by Fr. Johnny Hernandez, who sent it to Bishop Warlito I. Cajandig.

The bishop, in his Christmas message appealing for peace, composed a poem, dedicated to the family of Balong.

Until now, despite the promise of Paman that Balong will be returned to his family and relatives family, they are still waiting in vain.

Balong's father could hardly sleep and eat, constantly worrying about his son. He lamented in near tears and declared: "If we cannot still find him, I might die first!"

"He is a good man and not troublesome. We are just poor," De Chavez said of Balong.

In an interview, Lieutenant Colonel Gomez said Balong was released immediately after his interrogation. He claimed that according to his informants, Balong was a kind of "liwaliw" (wanderer).

He, however, promised in last Friday's multisectoral peace dialogue at Riceland II that he would immediately address the concern of Nazarro's disappearance.

"I've never prayed as hard as now and I will keep on praying until my brother Balong has returned home. Please help my family in praying," De Chavez said.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

229 co-ops lose licenses

LEGAZPI CITY—The Cooperatives Development Authority has cancelled the licenses of 229 cooperatives in Albay due to mismanagement and corruption.

Ramon Mendizabal, CDA provincial cooperatives specialist, blamed mismanagement for the failure of co-op members to pay back loans.

Worse was the corruption of members themselves, he said.

Mendizabal said, 543 co-ops were granted licenses in 2002. Most of them were multipurpose agricultural (290) and non-agricultural entities (151).

The 229 co-ops did not take their businesses seriously despite being given the whole month of December last year as "grace period" within which to abide by CDA requirements, Mendizabal said.

Had they submitted their annual reports and audited financial statements, they could have recovered and grown by this time, he said.

The cooperatives had been issued "show-cause" orders from the CDA, but they ignored these, he added.

"Thus, we resorted to court hearings and finally cancelled their licenses," Mendizabal explained.

So far, only 146 co-ops are operational, the CDA official said. The agency, he said, had yet to deal with another 135 non-operational co-ops starting this month. *Ronnie Lorejo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Jobless rate rise feared

TACLOBAN CITY—A total of 203 workers in Eastern Visayas lost their jobs last year due to the prevailing economic crisis, according to the regional Department of Labor and Employment.

Rodolfo Sabulao, labor regional chief, said that with the workers' dislocation, unemployment rate in the region could reach double digits.

As of October last year, the unemployment rate already stood at 9.2 percent. The region has more than 2 million workers.

"(The) majority of the displaced workers are from Leyte," Sabulao said.

At Philippine Associated Smelting Refinery Corp. alone, 90 workers were displaced, he said. Pasar, which is located at the Leyte Industrial Development Estate in Isabel, Leyte, is one of the region's biggest employers, with a work force of more than 1,000.

The other displaced workers came from 28 establishments, three of which completely shut down operations, Sabulao said.

He said the unemployment rate could go beyond 10 percent because of adverse economic conditions that force establishments to retrench workers or shut down operations.

On top of this, he said, thousands of students who will be graduating this March will be seeking employment. *Joey Gabieta, PDI Visayas Bureau*

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2003 Market Calendar

Domestic

FEBRUARY

e-Services Philippines: The IT Outsourcing and Subcon Exhibition
IT and IT-enabled Services
World Trade Center, Manila
13-15 February

APRIL

Manila F.A.M.E. International
Giftware & Holiday Décor;
Home Furnishings; Wearables
World Trade Center,
Philippine Trade Training Center, Manila
24-27 April

JUNE

BIO-Search
Organic, Herbal and Natural Health
Products & Services
Philippine Trade Training Center, Manila
19-22 June

AUGUST

resourcExchange/ Industry Search (rE/IS)
Industrial Manufactures;
Raw Materials & Components
Philippine Trade Training Center, Manila
21-23 August

OCTOBER

Manila F.A.M.E. International
Giftware & Holiday Décor;
Home Furnishings; Wearables
World Trade Center,
Philippine Trade Training Center, Manila
23-26 October

NOVEMBER

Asian Ethnic Food Fest
Fresh & Processed Food;
Organic Food
World Trade Center, Manila
21-23 November

Overseas

JANUARY

VICENZAORO 1
Fine Jewelry
Vicenza, Italy
12-19 January

imm cologne– The International Furniture Fair
Home Furnishings
Cologne, Germany
13-19 January

ChristmasWorld
Giftware & Holiday Décor
Frankfurt, Germany
25-29 January

FEBRUARY

Gulfood
Fresh & Processed Food
Dubai, U.A.E.
23-26 February

MARCH

Natural Products Expo West
Organic & Natural Products
Anaheim, California, USA
6-9 March

Foodex
Processed Food & Marine Products
Tokyo, Japan
11-14 March

Coverings
Flooring Materials
Florida, USA
24-27 March

Philippine Solo Exhibition in Shanghai
Food & Beverages; Garments
Fashion Accessories; Jewelry
Home Furnishings; Gifts & Houseware;
Building Materials; Services
Shanghai, China
27-30 March

APRIL

SETI (European Information Technologies Week)
Software & Applications Development
Paris, France
1-3 April

Asia Pacific Leather Fair
Footwear & Leathergoods
Hong Kong
7-9 April

14th Annual Conference for Medical Transcription Companies with Mission to the USA
Medical Transcription Services
Texas, USA
10-13 April

JUNE

International Animated Film Market
Animation Services
Annecy, France
2-7 June

Flavors of the Philippines– Food Festival in Sweden
Fresh & Processed Food
Stockholm, Sweden
12-19 June

Tigers of Asia
Giftware & Holiday Décor
Florida, USA
27-29 June

SEPTEMBER

International Ship Suppliers Association Annual Convention & Trade Exhibition
Processed Food;
Alcoholic Beverages
Portoroz, Slovenia
5-7 September

Transformation Exhibit
Construction Materials;
Home Furnishings
New York, USA
November

OCTOBER

INDEX Dubai
Furniture/Interior &
Architectural Design Services
Dubai, U.A.E.
7-11 October

NOVEMBER

AAPEX
Motor Vehicle Parts
Las Vegas, USA
4-7 November

COMDEX Fall
IT & IT-enabled Services
Nevada, USA
17-21 November

The calendar of events is subject to change.

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Braganza expected to replace Bunye

From page A1

expected to report back for work in Malacañang today.

The sources said the President made the assurance to Romulo by phone.

"A lot of names have been mentioned as supposed replacements for Secretary Romulo, but the truth is he'll stay," a source said. "The President herself assured him of that."

Braganza, a former member of the so-called "Spice Boys" in the House of Representatives, was Ms Macapagal's first nominee to the DAR.

Tiglao was appointed spokesperson in April 2001 and named press secretary a year later.

But amid rumors of conflict between him and a member of the President's inner circle, he took a six-month leave and left for Japan for a fellowship program. He was given a concurrent position as chief of staff upon his return last November.

Bunye, a former congressman representing Muntinlupa City, was appointed press secretary in Tiglao's absence.

Rumor mill

Apparently because of Romulo's absence, the rumor mill last week recycled old talk that Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho was set to assume the post of the executive secretary.

The finance portfolio will supposedly be given to Customs Commissioner Antonio Bernardo, who will reportedly be replaced by Roberto Lastimoso, currently assistant transportation secretary and head of the Land Transportation Office, and formerly director general of the Philippine National Police.

Talk of Romulo's exit from the Cabinet first surfaced in May 2002 when he had a heart bypass.

Romulo, then finance secretary, replaced Renato de Villa as executive secretary in 2001, when the latter underwent the same kind of surgery.

According to talk, Romulo himself is asking for a lighter workload. But a source claimed the contrary, pointing out that his health was "very good."

"His doctor advised him before to lighten his work load. but he said, 'You don't understand. I like my work and therefore it's not really work for me,'" the source said.

While Romulo was recuperating from surgery, Presidential Legal Counsel Avelino Cruz took over his functions and has since been repeatedly mentioned in political circles as among the executive secretary's possible replacements.

But the source insisted that it was Romulo who had recommended that Cruz serve as acting executive secretary in the meantime.

The others being mentioned as possible replacements for Romulo were Tiglao and Tom Alcantara, a former trade undersecretary.

The INQUIRER reported in November that significant changes would be made in the Cabinet as part of the Macapagal administration's renewed efforts to build a "strong republic."

The first wave of changes occurred on Nov. 30, National Heroes Day, when the President announced in a policy speech the appointments of environmentalist Elisea Gozun to replace then Environment Secretary Heherson Alvarez and of Luis Lorenzo, her then adviser for the creation of jobs, to replace Agriculture Secretary Leonardo Montemayor.

In a speech before the business community last month, the President named a new head of the National Economic and Development Authority, supposedly in keeping with her shift in focus from macroeconomic to microeconomic management.

She named Romulo Neri, then head of the think tank Congressional Budget and Planning Office, as the new Neda chief vice Dante Canlas.

Last weekend, the President named Public Works Secretary Simeon Datumanong as justice secretary, replacing the resigned Hernando Perez.

Bayani Fernando, chair of the Metro Manila Development Authority, is being touted as Datumanong's likely successor at the Department of Public Works and Highways. *(See story on Page A1.)*

Praise

Certain quarters have questioned Datumanong's capability to take up the justice portfolio, saying that he was hardly known in legal circles.

But both administration and opposition lawmakers yesterday praised Ms Macapagal for the appointment. Some of them said it indicated her sincerity in announcing that she would keep the remaining one-and-a-half years of her term politics-free.

"Her style of choosing appointees is apolitical and unorthodox. This proves her point that she doesn't want politics anymore," Surigao del Norte Rep. Robert Ace Barbers said in a phone interview.

"[Datumanong] will be a symbol of the justice system for [the people of Mindanao], especially those who have been deprived of social justice," Barbers added.

Deputy Speaker Raul Gonzalez said he was surprised at the President's choice, but stressed that Datumanong, a lawyer, was well suited for the job.

Leyte Rep. Ted Failon described Datumanong's appointment as "one step toward creating a credible and controversy-free" Department of Justice.

He said Datumanong was one of the few members in the Cabinet who had managed to "stay clean and focused on his job."

In another phone interview, Zamboanga City Rep. Celso Lobregat said he was elated that somebody from Mindanao had taken the top DOJ post.

But he wondered whether this would mean that Datumanong, a former congressman representing Maguindanao, would not be able to seek another term at the House in the 2004 elections.

Sen. Francis Pangilinan was yet another lawmaker who lauded Datumanong's appointment.

"The course of justice in the country would now have the benefit of a homegrown Mindanao viewpoint," the administration senator said. "[His appointment] will provide a fresh and more expansive view at the Department of Justice." *With reports from Christine O. Avendaño and Rocky Nazareno*

MMDA + DPWH = BF?

From page A1

purported choice to replace outgoing Public Works Secretary Simeon Datumanong, yesterday said he was more keen on heading not only the MMDA but also the Department of Public Works and Highways.

In Fernando's opinion, putting the MMDA and the DPWH under one head will improve coordination between the two agencies, particularly concerning infrastructure and flood-control projects.

"It's up to the President where she wants me to be," he told the INQUIRER. "But I think we really have to have better coordination between the MMDA and the DPWH."

Fernando said he would decide next week whether to take on the public works portfolio.

He said he was a bit reluctant to accept Malacañang's offer because of unfinished business at the MMDA.

For one, he has yet to win the battle against illegal vendors as part of the campaign to rid Metro Manila's sidewalks of all obstructions, he said. And for another, infrastructure projects that would help solve flood problems in the metropolis are not yet completely in place.

But should the President agree to his idea of a unified MMDA and DPWH, Fernando said, the next big question was he would work under their complex bureaucracy.

The two agencies had been blaming each other whenever Metro Manila was inundated in floodwaters—until the President ordered the MMDA to take charge of the government's flood-control projects.

'Ain't broke'

The President has just named Datumanong justice secretary, replacing Hernando Perez who resigned amid allegations of extortion.

But three congressmen are not sold on the idea of putting Fernando at the DPWH.

Surigao del Norte Rep. Robert Ace Barbers and Zamboanga City Rep. Celso Lobregat said Fernando had been doing very well at the MMDA, while Leyte Rep. Ted Failon said it would be better for the President to appoint a career official in place of Datumanong at the DPWH.

"If it ain't broke, why fix it?" Barbers said of Fernando's performance, noting the "political will" he had shown at his current post.

"Let him continue what he's doing," Lobregat said, and pointed out that Fernando would have to take some months to adjust to the DPWH.

On the other hand, Deputy Speaker Raul Gonzalez said he was in favor of Fernando accepting the public works portfolio.

Should this happen, Gonzalez said, he would recommend that Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye take Fernando's post at the MMDA.

Gonzalez recalled that he had earlier pushed Bunye for the MMDA post. He said Bunye had been given the chance to chair the MMDA when the latter was still serving as mayor of Muntinlupa City.

"Anyway, there are too many spokespersons for the President," Gonzalez noted.

Failon said the President should appoint a career official to the top DPWH post because this would boost the morale of the government bureaucracy as well as ensure that the department would be run effectively.

'Let's see'

But Wilson Fortaleza, president of the militant group Sanlakas, has posed a challenge to the administration: Measure Fernando's caliber by appointing him to a "graft-ridden" agency such as the Bureau of Internal Revenue or the Bureau of Customs.

Fortaleza said that while Fernando was "the kind of leader who has strong political will, which most of our leaders lack today," his "victims" so far had been "only the poor, nameless and weak."

"Let's see if BF (Fernando) really has the political will to handle corruption-ridden institutions," Fortaleza said, adding:

"At the MMDA and DPWH, [it will be easy] for him to launch an all-out war against defenseless vendors and the urban poor. But at the BIR or Customs, he will be battling the rich and powerful.

"We will be happy to see BF, as BIR chief, going after those tax evaders who are the prime suspects for the government's failure to generate high revenue, or as Customs chief, prosecuting politician-backed smugglers and racketeers."

Fortaleza claimed that former Internal Revenue Commissioner Rene Bañez failed to meet his targets because of his inability to solve tax evasion cases.

"We'd like to see if BF can make a difference," Fortaleza said.

But should these dream posts for Fernando not materialize, he said, "the vendors, urban poor and other basic sectors will still campaign for his ouster from the MMDA."

And if the man is thinking of running for any post in 2004, "we'd have the good memory not to vote for him," Fortaleza added. *With reports from Christine O. Avendaño and Agnes E. Donato*

'More spiritual' Manong Ernie seeking merit points from God

From page A1

A "more spiritual" Maceda—Manong Ernie to many—started to emerge about five months ago when he discovered the MIHC.

He said he was introduced to the healing sanctuary in August last year by an Ateneo Law '56 classmate, Benny Villamor, whose cancer of the pancreas was "healed here."

"I was of course skeptical at the beginning like most people who came here," said Maceda, who admitted to being just a "run-of-the-mill Catholic" content with attending Sunday Mass and who had never joined lay groups such as Couples for Christ or Knights of Columbus.

"But then I was immediately convinced of the sincerity and saw something genuine and real, because unfolding before my eyes are small-, medium-, large-sized miracles of one kind or another," he said.

With his own diabetes and cataract healed at the MIHC, Maceda became almost a daily visitor to the center. But instead of just finding a cure or spiritual solace for himself, he said he now serves as "a bridge for other people who wanted access to Sister Glo."

In the last five months, he said he's been visiting "three times a week" and referred "around 500 people" to the MIHC, a three-year-old healing spa established by the Religious of the Virgin Mary congregation.

Among the VIPs he had brought here, he said, were Sen. Loren Legarda and husband ex-Gov. Tony Leviste, former Speaker Arnulfo Fuentebella, Manila Rep. Harry Angping, and former Public Works Minister Jesus Hipolito.

Second Lourdes

Maceda has also accompanied many *balikbayans* and listeners of his radio program who had heard him talk about the center, which he believes can be a "second Lourdes and draw even foreigners."

Regularly giving testimonials at Masses held at the MIHC chapel, Maceda said he has also started helping the RVM nuns push for the sainthood of the order's founder, Mother Ignacia del Espiritu Santo, by telling patients to "document" their miraculous healing experiences for the RVM to compile and send to the Vatican.

But Maceda's most famous referrals were the detained Estrada, who had to obtain court approval to bathe in the "miraculous waters" drawn from the site last Dec. 19, and Ms Macapagal, who was prayed over at the Palace last Jan. 3.

Expectedly, Maceda's role in an apparent bid to link the Macapagal and Estrada camps at least through religious rituals drew sneers from political observers.

The militant group Pamalakaya, for instance, said Maceda's acts were a "discreet" maneuver leading to "negotiated political concessions" between the two sides, such as placing Estrada under house arrest and dropping the government's plunder case against him.

"We were not born yesterday not to understand the politics of the elite," said Pamalakaya chair Fernando Hicap in a statement.

Inner changes

But Maceda told the INQUIRER that all he hoped to achieve was to see Ms Macapagal and Estrada "get rid of their anger, their negativities, and forgive their enemies"—spiritual effects that MIHC patients and visitors are said to experience.

Maceda said he himself had undergone inner changes—not just physical healing—since he started frequenting the center. He has undergone the "miracle bath" some 10 times, he said.

"I'm a hyperactive, impatient person, but now I am amazed at the length of time I've been spending here (12 to 15 hours per visit) without getting tired of it."

"I'm at the endgame of my mortality (where) politics now has a lower priority … Don't ask me what it was, but within the last few weeks I've been offered a Cabinet position and I begged off," said Maceda, who is president emeritus of the Nationalist People's Coalition allied with the ruling Lakas party.

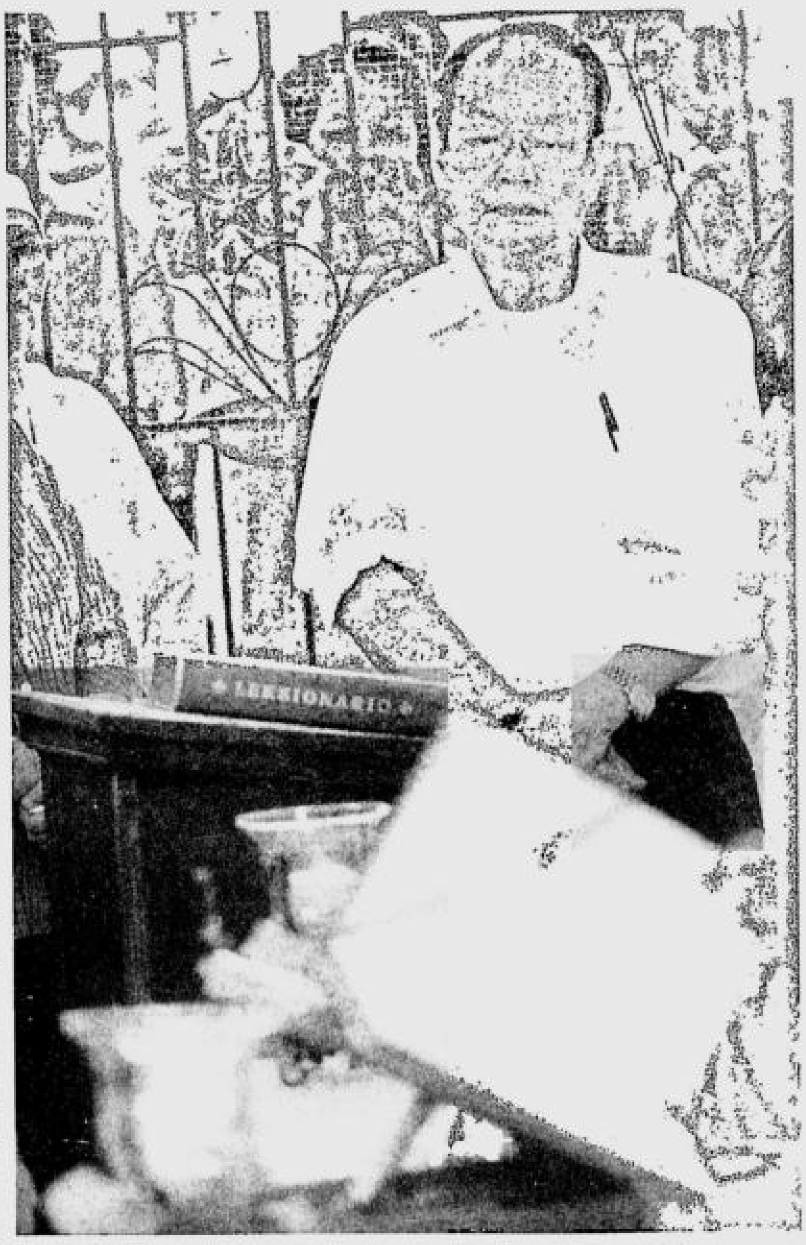
Was some humbling experience in his personal or public life also a factor that drove him to his spiritual renewal?

"I don't know if it's a humbling experience, but, you know, Edsa II was very traumatic for us who were with the Erap administration and Edsa III was also another traumatic experience," he said.

"Well, I am 67 years old and really on the way to retirement. The humbling experience is the realization that you haven't been as close to God as you should have been in the past … As you grow old you start feeling more pains and health problems. Realizing your own mortality, you strive to make up for all your deficiencies with the Lord."

Conceding that the "media, especially the INQUIRER, make me come out as some sort of a villain as you do with other politicians," Maceda said he considers what he does now as a "more meaningful form of public service."

For here, he explained, he seeks no votes or political appointments in return, but only "merit points with God."



MACEDA: The humbling experience is the realization that you haven't been as close to God as you should have been in the past. JOAN BONDOC

40% of US nuns abused, says poll

From page A1

pression, and some said they had attempted suicide.

"These women have been the stalwarts of the Church for centuries, and a significant percentage of them have been victimized as a result of the structure of the very institution to which they have dedicated their lives," John Chibnall, a research psychologist and associate professor at St. Louis University, who co-authored the study, told the newspaper.

Another researcher, Ann Wolf, said the issue had received far too little attention from the Catholic hierarchy.

"The bishops appear to be only looking at the issue of child sexual abuse, but the problem is bigger than that," she told the Post-Dispatch. "Catholic sisters are being violated, in their ministries, at work, in pastoral counseling."

Nearly one in five of the respondents said she had been sexually abused as a child. While most of the abuse came at the hands of a male family member, some 9 percent of those abuse cases were at the hands of a priest, nun or other clergy member, the newspaper said.

Poignant

The study is the result of a 15-page survey returned by 1,164 nuns representing 123 religious orders throughout the United States, and is the only national scientific study dealing with the sexual victimization of nuns in the Catholic Church, according to its researchers.

Post-Dispatch reporter Bill Smith wrote: "The survey also solicited comments—many of them poignant—from the nuns who were questioned.

"Of the … surveys returned to the university, several included brief, personal stories from women who said they had been targeted. One woman wrote that after a priest fondled one of her breasts during confession, she remained so upset that she did not return to confession for the next 18 years.

"Another wrote that as a young girl, her uncle, who was also a priest, insisted on touching holy oil to her genital area 'to keep me safe while dating.' Later, her superiors forced her to attend religious retreats with the same uncle, she said.

"Still another wrote that a priest-therapist treating her for severe depression encouraged her to become involved in 'sexual experimentation.' The woman said she later began a relationship with another nun.

"Several of the women said such research was long overdue.

"'Thanks for taking the time to admit there is a problem in this area,' wrote one. 'Best wishes. God bless.'"

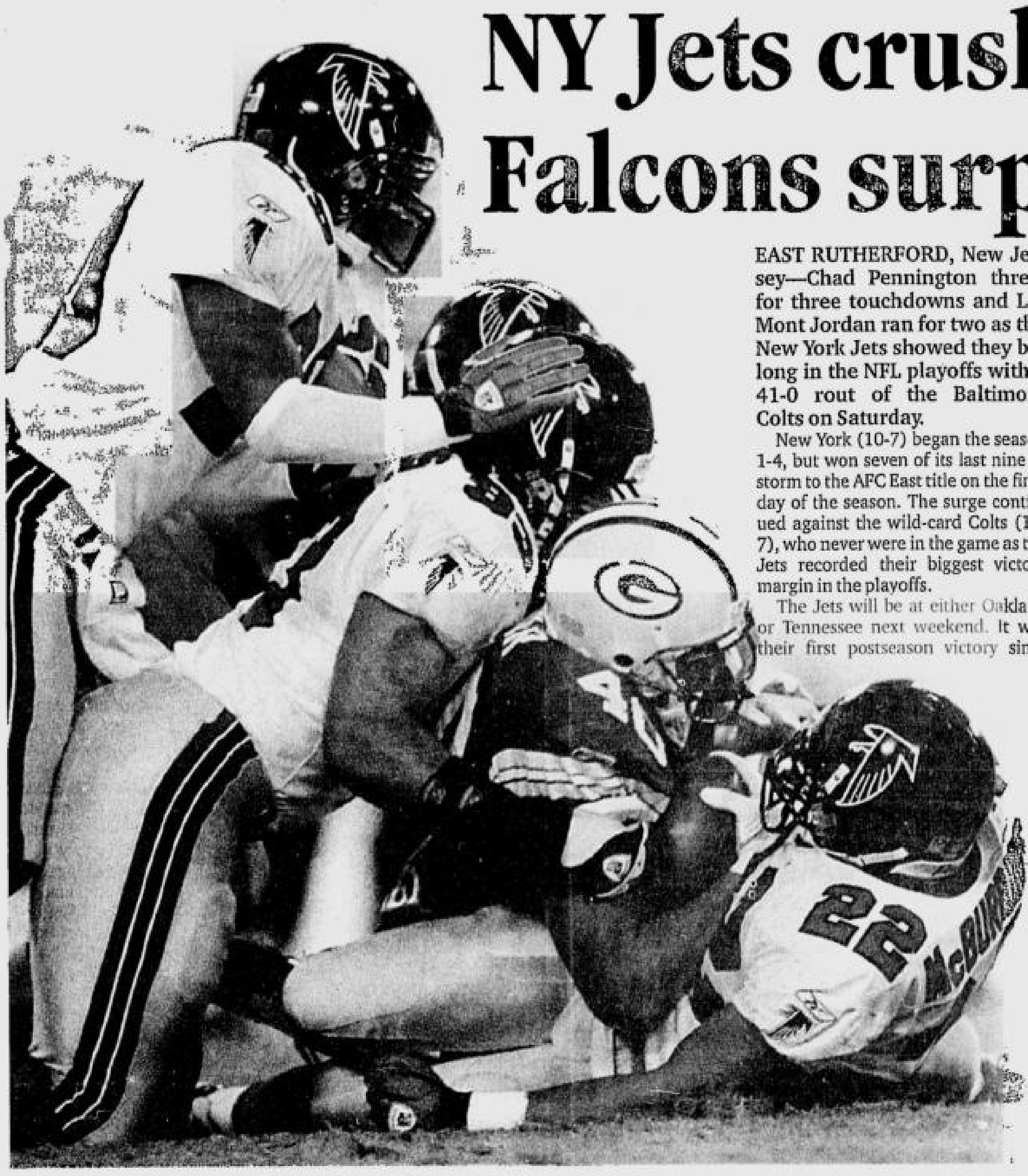
The researchers said the figures were likely to underestimate the phenomenon of sexual victimization of nuns.

"The fear and pain of disclosure would be sufficient enough to discourage responding in some sisters," the document said, as reported in the Post-Dispatch.

Christopher Dixon, who left the priesthood in 1996 and now lives in St. Louis, said he hoped that the publicity over the survey would generate the same "groundswell" of action that resulted from recent reports of priests' sexual abuse of minors. Bishop Anthony J. O'Connell of Palm Beach, Florida, resigned in March after admitting that he sexually abused Dixon more than 25 years earlier.

Female Church leaders can be "as much a part of this toxic environment" of cover-up and denial as male church leaders, Dixon said. *AFP*

NY Jets crush Colts, 41-0; Falcons surprise Packers



KEION Carpenter (left), Sam Rogers and Gerald McBurrows of the Atlanta Falcons tackle Tony Fisher (2nd from right) of the Green Bay Packers during the first half of their NFC Wild-Card game. The Falcons won, 27-7. AFP

EAST RUTHERFORD, New Jersey—Chad Pennington threw for three touchdowns and LaMont Jordan ran for two as the New York Jets showed they belong in the NFL playoffs with a 41-0 rout of the Baltimore Colts on Saturday.

New York (10-7) began the season 1-4, but won seven of its last nine to storm to the AFC East title on the final day of the season. The surge continued against the wild-card Colts (10-7), who never were in the game as the Jets recorded their biggest victory margin in the playoffs.

The Jets will be at either Oakland or Tennessee next weekend. It was their first postseason victory since 1998, when they made it to the AFC championship game, and the score matched the last playoff game at Giants Stadium, when the Giants beat Minnesota for the 2000 NFC title.

It also was the first NFL playoff game featuring two black head coaches. The Colts' Tony Dungy and the Jets' Herman Edwards, longtime friends, are the only black head coaches in the league. Edwards spent five seasons as Dungy's top assistant in Tampa before becoming the Jets' coach in 2001.

The student came out on top of the mentor because his offense was unstoppable, his defense stingy and his special teams dominant from the outset.

On the Jets' fifth offensive play, Pennington's screen pass floated into Richie Anderson's hands and he rambled down the left side for a 56-yard score. The touchdown was the longest of his 10-year career, the longest this season for the Jets and the longest scoring play from scrimmage in their playoff history.

The Peyton Manning-to-Marvin Harrison connection got the Colts moving — for just about the only time — immediately after the TD with three completions for 38 yards, with two third-down conversions. But Mike Vanderjagt was short and wide with a 41-yard field goal into the wind.

John Hall made one from the same spot early in the second quarter for a 10-0 lead.

Troy Walters then fumbled the kickoff and Ray Mickens pounced on it at the Indianapolis 39. Five runs and a pass play later, Jordan swept left from the 1 for a 17-point lead.

It became 24-0 with 37 seconds remaining in the first half when Pennington rolled out and found Santana Moss alone in the right corner of the end zone. Moss grabbed the high throw and barely got both feet in-bounds.

Falcons 27, Packers 7

In Green Bay, Wisconsin, it looked so perfect for Green Bay. Snow falling. Packers in green and gold. Lambeau Field in January. Only it wasn't Brett Favre making all the plays.

It was Michael Vick. The 22-year-old improvisational genius led the Atlanta Falcons to a 27-7 upset of the Packers in a wild-card playoff before a record crowd of 65,358 stunned souls.

The Packers (12-5) were the only team to go unbeaten at home during the regular season. And they had never lost a home playoff game since the NFL instituted a postseason in 1933 in going 13-0 — 11 of the wins coming at Lambeau and two more in Milwaukee.

The closest they had come was on New Year's Eve 1967, when Bart Starr knifed into the end zone with 13 seconds left to give Green Bay a 21-17 victory over Dallas in the coldest game in NFL history.

Falcons coach Dan Reeves threw a 50-yard touchdown pass on a halfback option that gave the Cowboys a 17-14 fourth-quarter lead in that game.

Favre had built a reputation as the game's greatest cold-weather quarterback, winning all 35 of his starts at home.

But by the time snow began falling at halftime, the Falcons had an astonishing 24-0 lead.

Favre finished 20-of-42 for 247 yards. AP

Yeng Guiao gets 3-year extension

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

BECAUSE of his impressive record in the Philippine Basketball Association, innovative Yeng Guiao has inked another three-year contract as head coach of crowd favorite Batang Red Bull in the tough PBA cage wars.

No doubt about it. The 42-year-old Yeng Guiao has done a wonderful job of handling the Photokina franchise of much admired George Chua to a remarkable turnaround from whipping boy to top contender in the country's premier professional league. In only nine PBA conferences since joining the organization three years ago, Batang Red Bull has won back-to-back Commissioner's Cup titles (2001-2002) and finished a respectable third in the Governors' Cup (2000).

A former commissioner of the Philippine Basketball League, Guiao said he was glad that his contract was extended anew, attesting to management's faith and trust in him. "I couldn't ask for more."

On the team's eight expiring players, Guiao said that except for one or two whose contracts wouldn't be renewed, he was opting for an intact lineup because it would be very, very difficult to train and develop new players. "After all," he explained, "the present players have already been jelling well and playing sharp and focus on their games." He once cited new additions Vince Hizon, Noli Locsin and upcoming Homer Se for teaming up brilliantly with the old members of the team. "Very rarely do you achieve chemistry in so short a time. But we were able to develop teamwork among them right now."

A true-blue sportsman, Guiao is also a respected horse owner and breeder, television analyst, former president of the Basketball Coaches Association of the Philippines and businessman. Yeng, son of the late Pampanga Gov. Bren Guiao, is currently a board member of the province. As a PBA coach, he also mentored Swift Mighty Meaty to two championships in 1992 and 1993, joining Jong Uichico, the late Ed Ocampo and Sen. Robert Jaworski as coaches who won four PBA titles each. Yeng took up his elementary and high school education at Letran College and La Salle Greenhills, earning a degree in industrial engineering at UP Diliman.

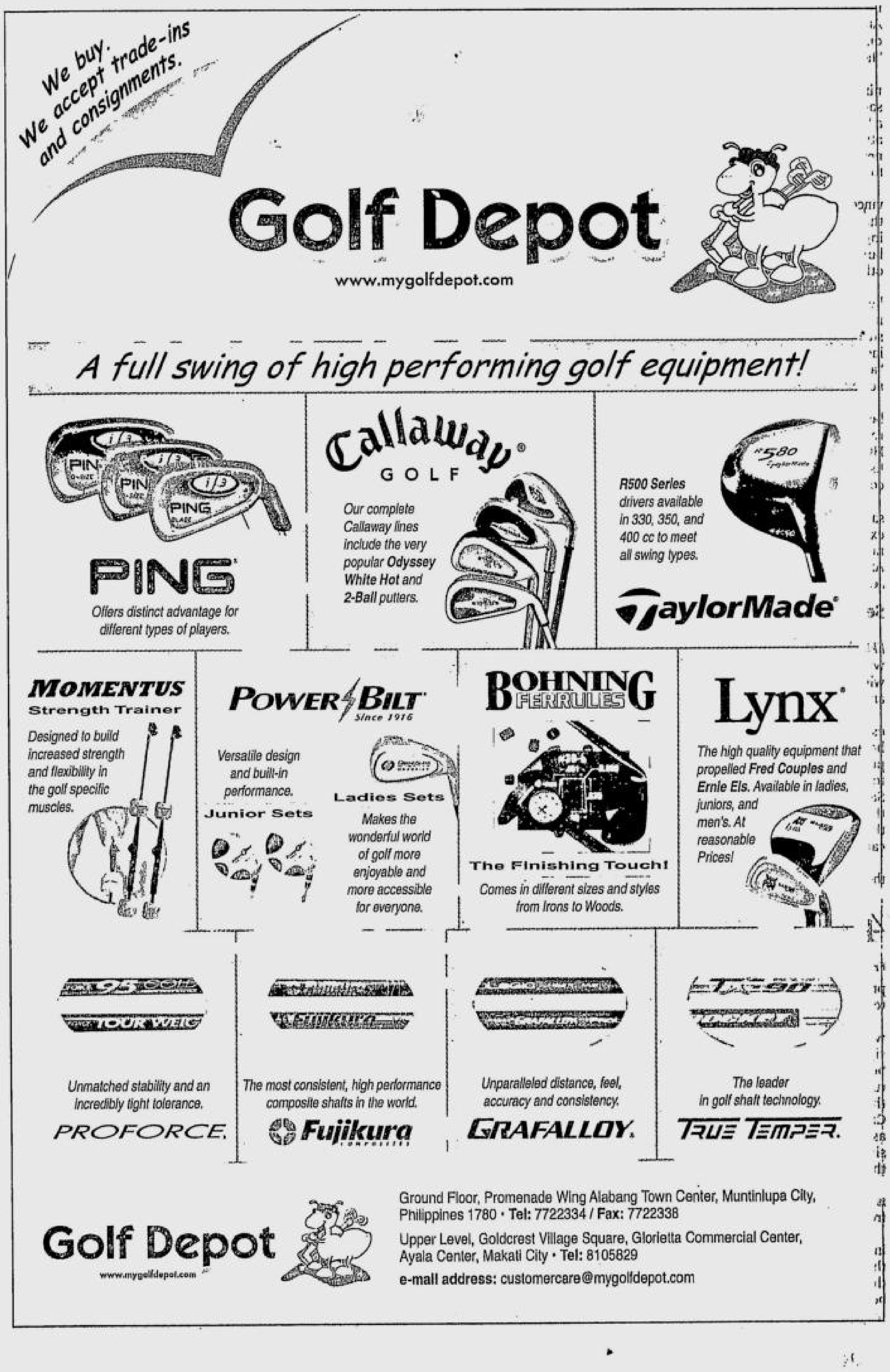
"We are looking forward to a fruitful season this year," Guiao said. "It's back to work; everyone's excited and the players are eager to play again after the long holidays."

New PBA Commissioner Noli Eala said the league's 2003 calendar will open on Friday, Jan. 10, with the staging of the first-ever Pre-Draft Camp for rookies at the SM Megamall Building B parking lot. It will be conducted by American collegiate coach John Moran. This will be followed by the annual PBA Draft on Jan. 12 at the Glorietta in Makati after which the season gets going with the All-Filipino Conference on the second Sunday of February.

Xavier tennis entry prevails

JOSHUA Tan Ho of Xavier bagged his sixth boys' 12-under title yesterday, beating Ilocos Norte bet Patrick Arevalo, 6-3, 7-5, in the finals of the 14th Andrada Cup age-group tennis tournament at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center.

Top seed Bambi Zoleta, a fifth grader at the Mary Hills College in Lucena City, was crowned girls' 14-under champion following a 3-6, 7-6 (6), 7-6 (4) victory over second seed Julie Em Botor of Morning Dew Montessori in Cainta, Rizal.



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SEASON-HIGH 41 PTS

Jordan lifts Wizards past Pacers

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Jordan played a season-high 53 minutes in his first 40-point game of the season, making 14 of 26 shots from the field and 10 of 12 from the line, including a pair of free throws with 3:03 left that gave the Wizards the lead for good.

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The Nets got 15 points and 12 assists from Jason Kidd, while Lucious Harris scored 14 and Richard Jefferson 13. They are two wins shy of the franchise record for consecutive victories (11) set during the 1982-83 season.

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AP

OMPLETE RESULTS
[illegible] 102, Philadelphia 83; Detroit [illegible] 86; New Jersey 88, Orlando 83; Utah 105, Minnesota 97; Washington 107, [illegible] 104 (OT); Chicago 85, Clev[illegible] Golden State State 86, Houston [illegible] 107, LA Lakers 93; Sacramento [illegible] Denver 76

WASHINGTON guard Michael Jordan (left) fights for ball possession against Indiana's Ron Mercer. The Wizards prevailed, 107-104. AFP

Unseeded Austrian rules ATP meet

DOHA—Unseeded Austrian Stefan Koubek earned the distinction of topping the ATP Champions Race following his 6-4, 6-4 win over American Jan-Michael Gambill in the final of the season-opening Qatar Open on Saturday.

KOUBEK

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"This is a memorable victory for me as I have been able to play consistently well," the world number 54 added after pocketing the winner's check of $142,000.

Koubek's run in Doha finally ended a nine-match losing streak dating back to last August. He had not won a match since reaching the second round in Indianapolis.

The 26-year-old broke ninth seed Gambill in the third game of the first set to take a 3-2 lead and held on to clinch the first set.

Gambill, voted as one of the 50 'Most Beautiful People in the World' by the People magazine in 2000, was error-prone as he netted numerous returns.

An increasingly frustrated Gambill even earned a warning from the umpire after slamming a ball into the stands.

While Gambill lost his cool, a focused Koubek played precision tennis.

Koubek gained the early advantage in the second set by breaking Gambill in the first game.

Whenever Gambill rushed to the net, Koubek passed him easily with brilliant down the line winners.

Both Koubek and Gambill had not won a title since each won in Delray Beach–Koubek in 2000 and Gambill in 2001.

"This is my biggest win," Koubek added.

A downcast Gambill said: "He played well, returned well...it was good tennis.

I wasn't getting my first serve the way I wanted." *Reuters*

Hewitt favored

PERTH, Australia—Outgunned and outthought twice in three days at the Hopman Cup, Lleyton Hewitt has hardly had the ideal preparation heading into the Australian Open.

But when the first grand slam of the season gets underway in eight days, top seed Hewitt will still be the strong favorite, according to his conqueror in Saturday's Hopman final.

Hewitt is bidding to become the first Australian to win the men's singles in his home grand slam since 1976 when Mark Edmondson beat John Newcombe.

Meanwhile, Romance and almost a year off have recharged Lindsay Davenport and she is ready once more to challenge the Williams sisters for international women's tennis supremacy.

The former world No.1, in her first match back since missing almost nine months recovering from knee surgery, trounced Australian Nicole Pratt 6-3, 6-3 in Sunday's first round of the Sydney International tournament. *Reuters*

Indiana cager fined, suspended 3 games

NEW YORK—Indiana Pacers forward Ron Artest was suspended for three games without pay and fined $35,000 by the NBA for hurling a television monitor and smashing a camera to pieces following a game the previous night.

Artest stormed off the court after the Pacers lost to the Knicks 98-96 at New York on Friday night, grabbed a monitor and threw it.

He then approached a cameraman, yanked the high-definition $100,000 camera away from him and smashed it to the floor.

"Tough loss, I guess," said MSG Network cameraman Mike Miner, who was filming in the tunnel leading from the court.

The league said Saturday that the $35,000 fine will be applied to the damages to the equipment. *AP*

US breeders eyeing

int'l derby victory

POWERHOUSE entries will be fielded by the visiting American breeders, who vow to rule the Ucap International 9-Cock Derby tomorrow (Tuesday, Jan. 7) at the Mandaluyong Coliseum.

Sponsors are Sagupaan Super Feeds, Pagcor, Heritage Hotel and Washout Shampoo.

The three-day event (Jan. 7, 9 and 11) is being hosted by OPMI president Vic Yu with the full support of the United Cockers Association of the Philippines.

Topnotch breeder Kelly Green of Alabama, the reigning 2002 Texoma 11-Cock Derby champion, heads an elite cast of American pit stars like Chuck Berry of Oklahoma, champion of the 2000 Ucap International Derby and Bobby Jones of Texas.

Also in town are Jimmy Cody of Alabama (guest of former Ucap president Butch Macasaet) and Howard Belk of California (in partnership with Alex Tang of Bicol).

Included in the powerhouse list are Fil-Ams George Goitia, Rene Medina and Boy de Guzman of California.

Submission of weights is today (Monday, Jan. 6), from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. Interested parties may contact 531-4003, 531-4005, 535-2341 and 534-4110.

At stake is a guaranteed prize of P2 million while entry fee is P35,000.

PHILIPPINE SPORTS COMMISSION

TENNIS WINNERS
Grand slam champ PJ Tierro of Olongapo City and other winners of the recent yearender 2002 Milo Junior Tennis Cup at the Rizal Tennis Center are shown after the awarding ceremonies. Photo includes newly appointed Milo sports manager Pat Goc-ong and CTW director Jovy Mamawal. Tierro won the singles titles in the junior men's 21-under and the premier boys' 18-under divisions then added the doubles crown with Nico Riego de Dios.

Sports equipment sale going on

JB Sports and JB Music are providing a rare chance to sports enthusiasts and music lovers to acquire their favorite game accessories and music equipment that are of top qualities – at discounted prizes – until Jan. 15.

Selected items discounted at 70 percent are available in the biggest sale ever launched by JB Music and JB Sports at Greenbelt 1, Paseo de Roxas, Makati City in front of AIM. The sale rush is still on.

Up for grabs are favorite items like Slam Dunk basketball set, complete boxing set, dart boards, guns, billiard sticks, dumb bells, volleyballs and practically all sports items in chess, taekwondo, baseball, badminton, tennis, swimming, among others.

Music lovers can buy acoustic guitar, electric guitar, cymbals, speakers, amplifiers and other music equipment all at rock-bottom prizes.

Interested parties may visit any of the following outlets of JB Music: Park Square 1 (815-3855/815-3949); SM Megamall (635-5691/635-5692); SM Southmall (806-6754/806-6725); SM Northmall (453-9503/925-4010); SM Fairview (418-0195/935-4467); SM Cebu (032-2321432); Salonga Music Rustan's (911-2307/911-2367); Harrison Plaza (526-3733/523-7041).

JB Sports outlets are located at Park Square 1 (840-5346/892-1025); SM Manila (522-9480/522-7766); Cebu City (032-2339495) and SM Pampanga (045-9611631).

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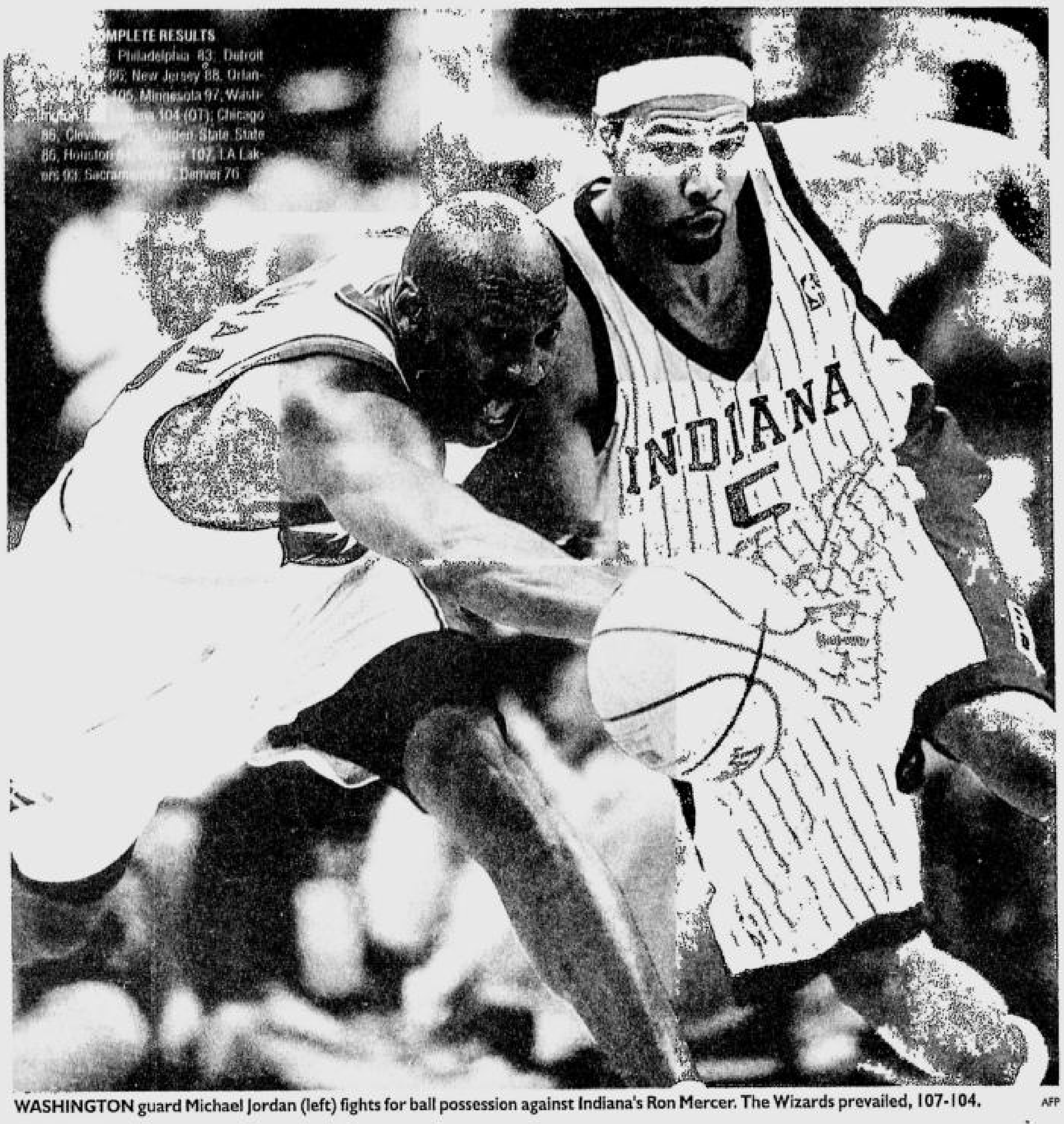

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"This is a memorable victory for me as I have been able to play consistently well," the world number 54 added after pocketing the winner's check of $142,000.

Koubek's run in Doha finally ended a nine-match losing streak dating back to last August. He had not won a match since reaching the second round in Indianapolis.

The 26-year-old broke ninth seed Gambill in the third game of the first set to take a 3-2 lead and held on to clinch the first set.

Gambill, voted as one of the 50 'Most Beautiful People in the World' by the People magazine in 2000, was error-prone as he netted numerous returns.

An increasingly frustrated Gambill even earned a warning from the umpire after slamming a ball into the stands.

While Gambill lost his cool, a focused Koubek played precision tennis.

Koubek gained the early advantage in the second set by breaking Gambill in the first game.

Whenever Gambill rushed to the net, Koubek passed him easily with brilliant down the line winners.

Both Koubek and Gambill had not won a title since each won in Delray Beach–Koubek in 2000 and Gambill in 2001.

"This is my biggest win," Koubek added.

A downcast Gambill said: "He played well, returned well...it was good tennis.

I wasn't getting my first serve the way I wanted." *Reuters*

Hewitt favored

PERTH, Australia—Outgunned and outthought twice in three days at the Hopman Cup, Lleyton Hewitt has hardly had the ideal preparation heading into the Australian Open.

But when the first grand slam of the season gets underway in eight days, top seed Hewitt will still be the strong favorite, according to his conqueror in Saturday's Hopman final.

Hewitt is bidding to become the first Australian to win the men's singles in his home grand slam since 1976 when Mark Edmondson beat John Newcombe.

Meanwhile, Romance and almost a year off have recharged Lindsay Davenport and she is ready once more to challenge the Williams sisters for international women's tennis supremacy.

The former world No.1, in her first match back since missing almost nine months recovering from knee surgery, trounced Australian Nicole Pratt 6-3, 6-3 in Sunday's first round of the Sydney International tournament. *Reuters*

Indiana cager fined, suspended 3 games

NEW YORK—Indiana Pacers forward Ron Artest was suspended for three games without pay and fined $35,000 by the NBA for hurling a television monitor and smashing a camera to pieces following a game the previous night.

Artest stormed off the court after the Pacers lost to the Knicks 98-96 at New York on Friday night, grabbed a monitor and threw it.

He then approached a cameraman, yanked the high-definition $100,000 camera away from him and smashed it to the floor.

"Tough loss, I guess," said MSG Network cameraman Mike Miner, who was filming in the tunnel leading from the court.

The league said Saturday that the $35,000 fine will be applied to the damages to the equipment. *AP*

US breeders eyeing

int'l derby victory

POWERHOUSE entries will be fielded by the visiting American breeders, who vow to rule the Ucap International 9-Cock Derby tomorrow (Tuesday, Jan. 7) at the Mandaluyong Coliseum.

Sponsors are Sagupaan Super Feeds, Pagcor, Heritage Hotel and Washout Shampoo.

The three-day event (Jan. 7, 9 and 11) is being hosted by OPMI president Vic Yu with the full support of the United Cockers Association of the Philippines.

Topnotch breeder Kelly Green of Alabama, the reigning 2002 Texoma 11-Cock Derby champion, heads an elite cast of American pit stars like Chuck Berry of Oklahoma, champion of the 2000 Ucap International Derby and Bobby Jones of Texas.

Also in town are Jimmy Cody of Alabama (guest of former Ucap president Butch Macasaet) and Howard Belk of California (in partnership with Alex Tang of Bicol).

Included in the powerhouse list are Fil-Ams George Goitia, Rene Medina and Boy de Guzman of California.

Submission of weights is today (Monday, Jan. 6), from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. Interested parties may contact 531-4003, 531-4005, 535-2341 and 534-4110.

At stake is a guaranteed prize of P2 million while entry fee is P35,000.

PHILIPPINE SPORTS COMMISSION

TENNIS WINNERS
Grand slam champ PJ Tierro of Olongapo City and other winners of the recent yearender 2002 Milo Junior Tennis Cup at the Rizal Tennis Center are shown after the awarding ceremonies. Photo includes newly appointed Milo sports manager Pat Goc-ong and CTW director Jovy Mamawal. Tierro won the singles titles in the junior men's 21-under and the premier boys' 18-under divisions then added the doubles crown with Nico Riego de Dios.

Sports equipment sale going on

JB Sports and JB Music are providing a rare chance to sports enthusiasts and music lovers to acquire their favorite game accessories and music equipment that are of top qualities – at discounted prizes – until Jan. 15.

Selected items discounted at 70 percent are available in the biggest sale ever launched by JB Music and JB Sports at Greenbelt I, Paseo de Roxas, Makati City in front of AIM. The sale rush is still on.

Up for grabs are favorite items like Slam Dunk basketball set, complete boxing set, dart boards, guns, billiard sticks, dumb bells, volleyballs and practically all sports items in chess, taekwondo, baseball, badminton, tennis, swimming, among others.

Music lovers can buy acoustic guitar, electric guitar, cymbals, speakers, amplifiers and other music equipment all at rock-bottom prizes.

Interested parties may visit any of the following outlets of JB Music: Park Square 1 (815-3855/815-3949); SM Megamall (635-5691/635-5692); SM Southmall (806-6754/806-6725); SM Northmall (453-9503/925-4010); SM Fairview (418-0195/935-4467); SM Cebu (032-2321432); Salonga Music Rustan's (911-2307/911-2367); Harrison Plaza (526-3733/523-7041).

JB Sports outlets are located at Park Square 1 (840-5346/892-1025); SM Manila (522-9480/522-7766); Cebu City (032-2339495) and SM Pampanga (045-9611631).

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

All set for First Gentleman Tour Mindanao legs

ARROYO

IN A year of challenges, Philippine professional golf got a big shot in the arm with the revival of the nationwide tour through the instigation of the First Gentleman himself, Mike Arroyo, and Comelec chair Ben Abalos who is also the commissioner of the pro body.

Arroyo's unselfish act of providing the resources of his foundation to ensure that the local pros get back their livelihood proved to be a defining moment for the First Gentleman who is a devout golfer and a sports patron.

In no time, San Miguel Corporation responded to the call for support by Abalos with a significant financial backing and WG&A Super Ferry took out the transporation worries of the pros by giving them free passes for their southern campaign.

Ogie Manalo, president of the Federation of Golf Clubs Philippines Inc. which organizes the 12-leg circuit, said that it is certainly not easy for exclusive membership clubs to be disrupting their daily operations for a tour that, in reality, hardly gives them back anything.

"But knowing that the First Gentleman meant well, the Federation board felt we had to come in and give our share for a worthy cause," said Manalo.

As a result, Manalo said, managers and golf directors making up the leadership of the Federation have made their own unselfish acts of getting the tough job of organizing the previous six legs of the tour in Luzon and the Visayas done.

"It's not easy for employees of exclusive clubs to be flying in and out of Metro Manila just to make sure that everything is under control in every leg. For them to be doing it on a voluntary basis is another thing," Manalo said.

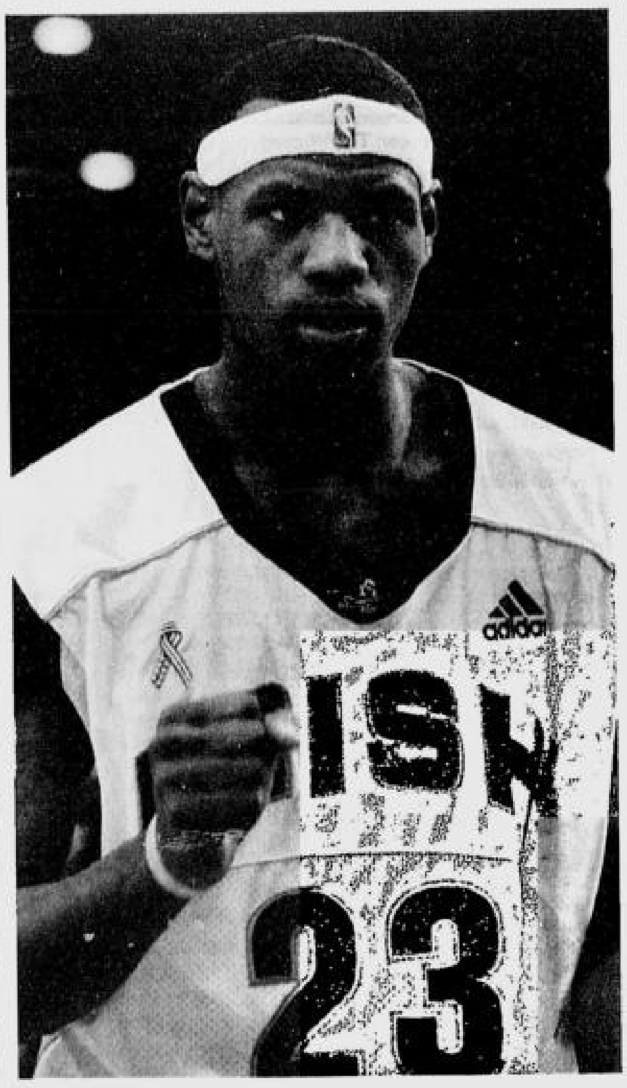
The setup has tremendously lowered organizational costs and will ultimately protect pro golfers, sponsors and host clubs from potential frauds.

"The First Gentleman's effort has reinvigorated the pro scene and with young players like Angelo Que already among the winners we really hope to see a snowballing of support from companies and individuals in whatever way for the circuit."

The Federation, a formidable force with 30 exclusive clubs now under its banner following the inclusion of the sprawling Eagle Ridge Golf and Country Club, is now preparing for the Mindanao swing of the circuit starting next week.

The Mindanao swing will bring the pros to the the Rancho Palos Verdes course in Davao and Pueblo del Oro and Del Monte courses in Cagayan de Oro. From there, the circuit heads back to Luzon for three more legs in Orchard, Southwoods and Tagaytay Midlands that should have prepared the pros well enough to make a strong challenge in the Wack Wack- Philippine Open early in March.

BLU'S Marlon Legaspi (left) powers his way to the basket in this PBL action at the Makati Coliseum. The 6-foot-5 Legaspi is expected to be a first round choice in the PBA draft on Jan. 12. PDI PHOTO



TOP PICK
St. Vincent-St. Mary's player LeBron James pumps his fist after scoring against Mater Dei in the second quarter, in Los Angeles, CA, Saturday. St. Vincent-St. Mary won, 64-58, with James scoring 21 points. James, 17, is expected to be the number one pick in the NBA draft this spring, following Kevin Garnett and Kobe Bryant who both entered the NBA from high school. AFP

List of PSA awardees

(continued from yesterday)

Marcus Valda (Southeast Asian Wrestling), Rener Mercado/Judith Ann Melencio, Bong Marquez/Belinda Adora (Asia-Pacific Dance Sport).

Lifetime Achievement Awards: Jun Bernardino, Rudy Salud, Leo Prieto (individual), Coke Go-for-Goal, Metropolitan Chess Club, Milo, San Miguel Corp. (corporate).

Special Citations: Adidas, Agfa, Dance Sport Council of the Philippines, FedEx, German Initiative in Football Otwards Peace in Mindanao (GIFT), Gloria Garchitorena-Goloy/Gregorio Antonio, Kenneth San Andres, Manila Sports Council, Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, Philippine Sports Commission, Red Bull.

Posthumous Awards: Charlie Badion, Art Borjal, Alaex Clarino, Eddie Decena, Ben Flores, Ben Francisco, Edilberto Gamilla, Eddie Lim, Rudy Navarro, Vincent Rodriguez, Jose Sering, Jack Tanuan, Martin Urra, Zaldy Zshornack.

The Awards Night is sponsored by Red Bull, Photokina and Agfa and supported by Samsung, San Miguel Corp., Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, Philippine Sports Commission and adidas.

It will be telecast by NBN-4.

SPORTS TV

Compiled by L. Manguiat

BASKETBALL: NBA - Sacramento vs Miami, 10 a.m. (r - 10 p.m.), Solar Sports, New Orleans vs Toronto, 7 p.m., IBC 13

TENNIS: ATP Tata Open, 6:30 a.m. (r), Star Sports

GOLF: Best of PGA - International Players, 6:30 p.m., Star Sports

Mastercard Masters, 9 p.m. (r), Star Sports

POOL: World Pool League 2002, 12 noon (r), ESPN

Rack 'Em Up 2, 12 noon (r), Star Sports

BOWLING: CGU Asian Bowling Tour, 1 p.m. (r), ESPN

USA vs Europe Tenpin Bowling 2002, 2 p.m. (r), ESPN

ICE SKATING: Bofrost Cup on Ice 2002 (r), 10 a.m., Star Sports

SOCCER: Western Union World Football, 11 a.m., ESPN

Spanish Football League, 7 p.m. (r), Star Sports

Schedules subject to change without prior notice.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

TODAY in 1986, Frederick Morgan beat Wally de Jesus, 6-4, 6-2, to bag the 10-and-under plum of the 1st Kodak Junior Masters tennis championship at the Philippine Columbian Association courts.

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Caloocan chesser wins

TWELVE-YEAR-OLD John Robin Buenavista of Caloocan and Emmanuel Eumir Songcuya II of San Juan started their campaign on a bright note Friday as they posted their third straight wins after three rounds in the final stage for the selection of the members of 2003 US-bound Milo Checkmate team at the Greenhills Shopping Center.

Buenavista, who beat Dominique Layugan of Cainta and Aices Salvador of Manila in the early rounds, scored his third victory over JC Marquez in 44 moves of a Caro-Kann to share the lead with Songcuya II with perfect scores of three points apiece in the six-man, under-12 group.

Songcuya II defeated Joshua Kirk Ver in 53 moves of a Sicilian Dragon in the third round and notched his two other points, also over Marquez and Layugan.

Pangasinan bet Haridas Pascua and Karl Vicente of Cainta went into winning spree to share the top positions in the under-10 group, with three points each in this yearly event organized by Metropolitan Chess Club for promising and deserving Milo Checkmate kids.

Pascua downed Jan Nigel Galan in 33 moves of a Sicilian game for his third point and last-minute entry Vicente scored his third straight win at the expense of Las Piñas beat Aurelio Isaac Doctor III in 40 moves of another Sicilian variation.

Blu dribblers . . .

From page A22

'We've stayed silent regarding the draft, but I have to stand up and protect the PBL," Trinidad said.

Over at the Pasig Sports Center, leader Welcoat (8-1) meets second-running Blu Detergent (7-3) in the resumption of the PBL Challenge Cup.

The Welcoat-Blu tiff is set at 5 p.m., after the 3 p.m. lower bracket clash between John O and Cheeseballs Shark.

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SPORTS

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BANNER YEAR

Racing sales hit record ₱6.8B

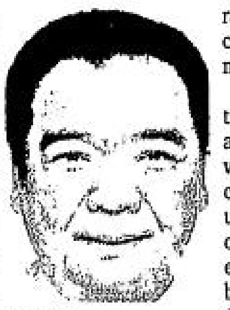
LOCAL horseracing industry sales for 2002 reached a record-breaking P6.8 billion, Philippine Racing Commission Chair Jimmy Dilag announced yesterday.

Dilag said the output, reflecting a significant 15 percent increase over last year's sales of P5.9 billion, generated a total of P1.02 billion in government revenues.

``It has been another banner year for local racing. We hope to surpass that sales again this year," he added.

Dilag attributed the achievement to the full backing given to the industry by the different racing organizations such as the Metropolitan Association of Race Horse Owners (Marho) and Philippine Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Organization (Philtobo) as well as the continuous patronage of horseracing aficionados.

The racing body chief also lauded the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office and San Miguel Corporation for their contribution to the record sales by sponsoring major stakes races such as the Presidential Gold Cup, First Gentleman Cup and RP Breeders' Cup.


DILAG

``Of course, we would also like to thank President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo for her support to the industry," said Dilag, a former pelotari and two-time commissioner who was appointed by the President last August.

``If the trend continues, maybe we can achieve our goal of P7 to P8 billion in gross sales for 2003," he added.

Dilag also said that the past year's earnings got a big boost from the Dec. 29 record sales of P46.3 million tallied at the Philippine Racing Club. That last racing day for 2002 upped the club's week sales to P170.8 million.

Other sectors of the industry like the jockeys, trainers and grooms associations were also cited by the Philracom which received congratulatory messages from various horseowners and breeders, among them respected businessman Norberto Quisimbing Jr.

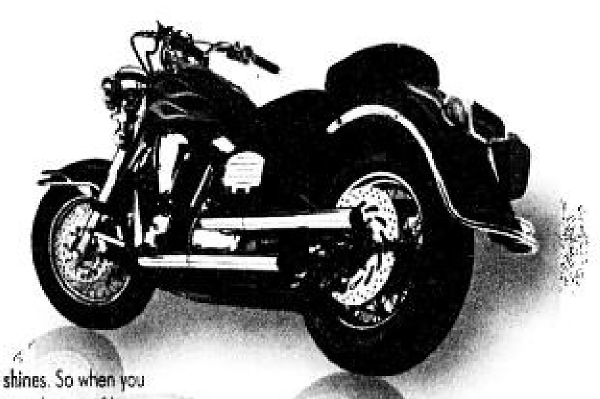
Dilag also heaped praises on commissioners Vergel Cruz, Eduardo Domingo Jr., Eduardo Jose, Rogelio Tandiama, Francis Trillana and Felizardo Sevilla for solidly working with him as a team.

The Philracom, according to Dilag, believes that if it is allowed to directly use the one-percent share of the gross receipt derived from total sales as provided under Presidential Decree No. 420 which created the racing agency, it can do much more to improve the horseracing industry, achieve higher sales and contribute greater revenues to the government.

Dilag said forecast for this year looks bright because the PCSO under chair Honeygirl de Leon has again committed to work alongside the Philracom in sponsoring several races like the monthly sweepstakes, PGC, FGC, Speaker's Cup, Marho Breeders' Cup and Mitra Cup Championships, among others.

``We at the Philracom are also looking forward to joining hands with the Marho, Philtobo and other racing groups in pursuing their various projects," added Dilag.

Dilag also bared that to spice up the races at the Santa Ana Park and San Lazaro Hippodrome this year, mini stakes races would be included weekly to bolster the regular program. *EV*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CHROME DAZZLER
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Blu dribblers in PBA draft

By Dennis U. Eroa

EVERYBODY'S talking about Enrico Villanueva and Rommel Adducul, but it will not come as a surprise to jaded observers if Marlon Legaspi and Arnold Calo give the big men a run for their money in this year's PBA draft slated on Jan. 12 at the Glorietta.

The 6-foot-5 Legaspi, dubbed as a young version of Alvin Patrimonio, and the 6-foot-3 Calo, a defensive specialist, are expected to be among this year's draft surprises.

Both are seeing action for Blu All-Purpose Detergent in the ongoing PBA Challenge Cup.

A Pampangueño, Legaspi is a two-time MVP in the PBL-Cebu dual meet and is a very flexible cager, who can play the small, big forward and center positions.

Virtually unstoppable with his hook shots, Legaspi also possesses a mean perimeter game and can bang bodies with taller and heftier foes.

Known for his go-hard attitude, Calo, the PBL's Most Improved Player, delights in shackling the opposing team's scorers.

Like Legaspi, Calo first shone as a starter for multi-titled Manuel Luis Quezon Stallions. He saw action for Red Bull, before suiting up for Blu.

While he likes to handcuff his foes, Calo also possesses a mean perimeter game.

Meanwhile, PBL Commissioner Chino Trinidad yesterday expressed alarm over the recent move of his PBA counterpart Noli Eala regarding the coming draft.

Trinidad reminded Eala of an existing PBL-PBA memorandum of agreement on the drafting of PBL cagers.

He stressed that the rookie draft camp slated on Jan. 10 at SM Megamall has a negative effect on PBL players who joined the draft.

Eala has threatened to sanction draftees, who will not attend the camp on Jan. 10, a move which Trinidad heavily criticized.

BLU/ A21

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Last hurrah

By Christian V. Esguerra

IN WHAT could be his last hurrah as Metropolitan Manila Development Authority chair, Bayani Fernando yesterday warned of an intensified drive against informal settlers.

Fernando, who has been offered to replace Simeon Datumanong as head of the Department of Public Works and Highways, said the MMDA would spare squatter shanties that block waterways and drainage systems.

President Macapagal had ordered that all demolitions should have the approval of Malacañang.

But Fernando pointed out that the recent Palace directive, which adds more teeth to the old Presidential Urban Poor Commission, does not cover demolitions ordered by the court.

"The President's order doesn't mean that we'd go easy on people illegally blocking our waterways," he told the INQUIRER.

"We have to do our job and that is to clean our drainage systems in time for the rainy season."

Fernando said the MMDA drive would affect thousands of squatters in northern Metro Manila and those living around Pasig river and portions of the Laguna Lake.

In a radio interview, he asked residents to police their communities to prevent outsiders from illegally building more shanties.

RP REQUEST TO BEIJING

Give list of China drug lords

By Philip Tubeza

NATIONAL Bureau of Investigation Director Reynaldo Wycoco said the Philippines will ask China for a complete list of its suspected drug dealers.

That way, Wycoco said, these drug lords will not be able to slip in and out of the country and conduct their criminal trade here.

Wycoco yesterday bared that the NBI is already drafting a letter, which will be forwarded to China's Department of Public Order and Safety.

The NBI is writing the Chinese because of the case of Wang Yashi, one of the two Mainlanders behind the drug labs raided recently in Valenzuela, Navotas, and Quezon City.

Wang, who was arrested in Pampanga in 1996 and later by the Caloocan police, was still able to enter the country unnoticed on Dec. 3.

"He was apparently here to harvest the shabu they were making," Wycoco said.

But the fire on Dec. 9 at the syndicate's Valenzuela warehouse jeopardized the group's local operation after authorities discovered that the warehouse was being used as a major shabu lab. Lawmen confiscated P1 billion worth of shabu there.

That same day, Wang, whose aliases include Aaron De Guzman and Willy Ong, was able to slip out of country via a Cathay Pacific flight.

His associate, Deng Xiao Li, left the country the following day on a Philippine Airlines flight.

"We want this stopped. They (drug dealers) should be identified and stopped at the country's airports and other ports of entry," Wycoco said.

He added that the NBI is also coordinating with the Bureau of Immigration to find out if somebody from BI is helping Wang's group.

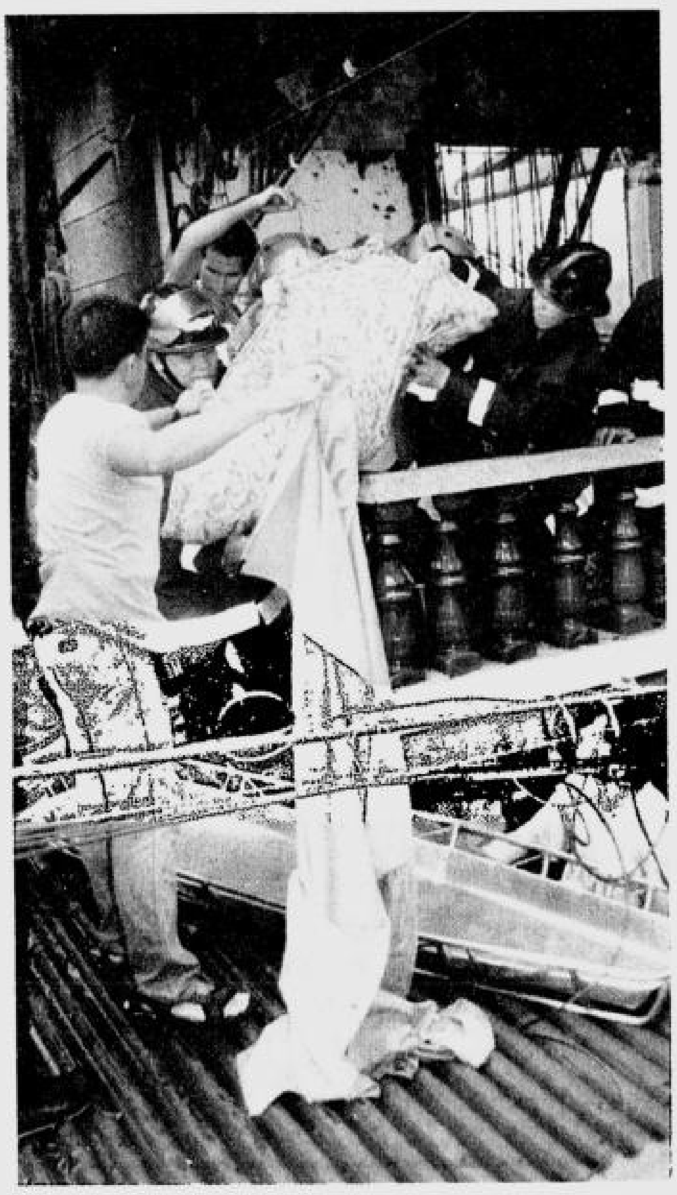
On Friday, lawmen raided the group's mini-lab and distribution center at 6-F Sobrepena St. New Manila, Quezon City.

Wycoco said his men are still continuing the debriefing of the source who tipped them about the New Manila lab.

"We are still goading him to say where the other labs and distribution centers in Metro Manila are," Wycoco said.

He said this was the same source who tipped the NBI about the warehouse in Navotas where P1 billion worth of shabu ingredients were recovered.

NBI agents recovered three kilos of "liquid" shabu, ephedrine, sulfates, plastic containers, while motors for drying shabu were found in the New Manila lab on Friday.



30-MINUTE TRAGEDY
Louie Bryan Cruz, 24, and his family were having a nap when fire razed their three-story house in Tondo, Manila at about noon yesterday. Cruz died in the 30-minute fire that spread to two other houses and destroyed P200,000 worth of properties. Cruz's charred body, wrapped in a curtain, is being hauled down by firemen. A total of 10 fires hit the Metro Manila area during the last New Year celebrations. ERIK ARAZAS

'Don't sabotage Gen. Maganto'

By Christian V. Esguerra

A HUNTER without an order.

This was how Leonard de Vera, lawyer of Baron Cervantes' family, described Chief Supt. Romeo Maganto who has been tapped to arrest Supt. Rafael Cardeño, the alleged brains behind the government informant's murder.

De Vera yesterday urged President Macapagal to issue a written order, formally designating Maganto as Task Force Cervantes chief to keep ranking police officers from supposedly muddling up the hunt.

Maganto, he said, "is experiencing sabotage" supposedly initiated by Cardeño's sympathizers at the Philippine National Police. He specifically identified Metro Manila Police chief Reynaldo Velasco who had reportedly insisted that Maganto should report to him.

"Velasco is obviously trying to protect Cardeño," the lawyer alleged.

On the eve of Cervantes' first death anniversary last Dec. 30, President Arroyo approved his parents' request for Maganto to head a team that would hunt down the alleged mastermind.

The President, through National Security Adviser Roilo Golez, gave Maganto a free hand in choosing the members of his team and instructed him to report directly to Golez, according to De Vera.

The lawyer said the President's move was her way of addressing PNP chief Hermogenes Ebdane's failure to collar Cardeño more than two months since a court issued a warrant for his arrest.

"If there would still be no written order from the President, we'll withdraw our request because her verbal order is not being followed," he said. "Ebdane and Velasco are making her order appear like an empty promise."

Without a written order from Ms Macapagal, Maganto could not request funds for his team's operations or pluck its members from different police units or from floating status, De Vera noted.

Maganto had earlier said that the officers he had tapped for Task Force Cervantes were on floating status. These were the same men that helped him arrest convicted killer Rolito Go in 1996.

The police general himself had been on floating status for more than a year before he was appointed to the task force.

■ Marikina mayor warned /A24

■ BARE EYE: Peñalosa officially divorced today /A24

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JAN 6, MONDAY 422-9877

Lenient car emission penalties will be in effect starting today

By Abigail L. Ho

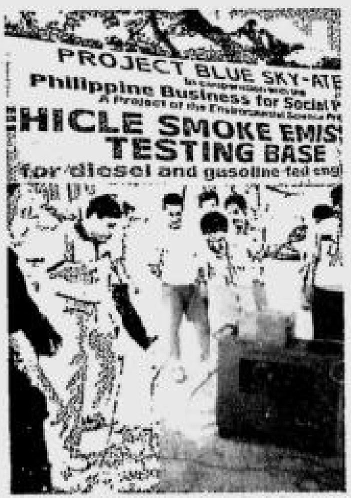
PUBLIC utility vehicles emitting thick, black smoke will not have their registrations renewed starting today unless they comply with new emission standards stated in the Clean Air Act.

However, those that will fail their vehicle emission tests will still be able to operate for another 90 days without having their franchises suspended for at least one year.

After a dialog with local transport leaders last week, the Land Transportation Office (LTO) agreed to just give PUVs a 90-day grace period on compliance instead of further delaying the implementation of new emission standards under the Clean Air Act.

Also, instead of the P300 that private emission testing centers (PETC) will charge for emission tests, PUVs will only have to pay P90 at the LTO.

"The cost of the emission test far outweighs the benefits that will be derived from the strict implementation of the program in terms of better health and less respiratory illnesses," LTO chief Roberto Lastimoso said.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Emission testers and technicians on the job.

Violators will be fined P1,000 on the first offense, P3,000 on the second offense and P5,000 and a suspension of franchise for up to one year on the third offense.

"But they can go and operate again if they comply," Lastimoso said.

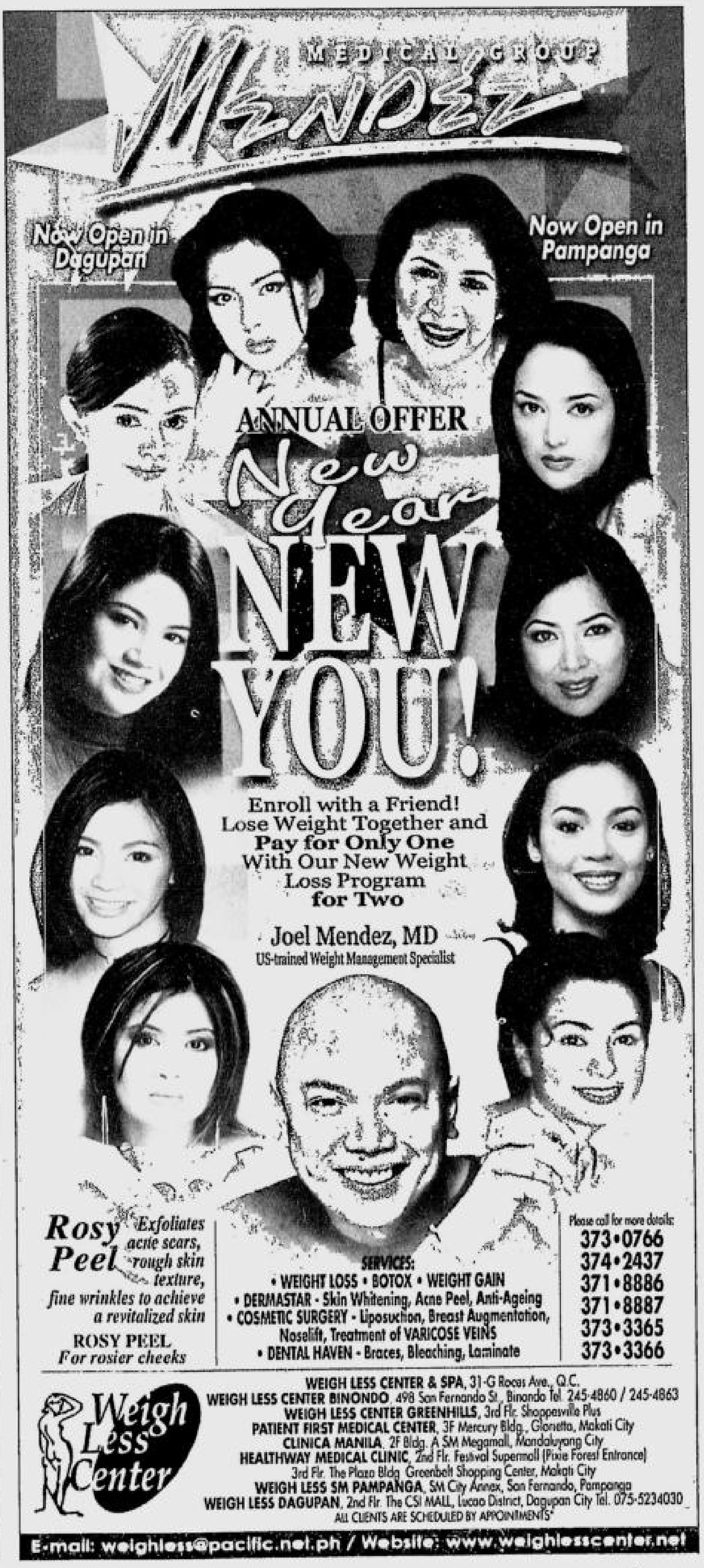
Also, as an added bonus, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is working out a financing scheme with the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) for public transport operators who will need to change their old engines into compliant ones.

Environment Secretary Elisea Gozun said that an initial meeting was held with the DBP last week and another meeting has been scheduled for today.

She disclosed that the Land Bank of the Philippines was also open to a similar arrangement with the LTO, DENR and public transport groups.

"The amount that they (transport groups) can borrow will depend on the extent of the repairs that have to be done on the vehicles. For jeepneys, for example, a top overhaul will cost P35,000 while a major overhaul will cost P50,000. Minor repairs can range from hundreds of pesos to several thousands. It really depends on the need," she said.

Transport groups, for their part, welcomed the DENR and the LTO's compromise terms but said a fare increase could still be in the offing, depending on the effect of their compliance with the Clean Air Act on their operational expenses.



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Marikina mayor warned

By Nelson Flores

THE REPORTED plan to bring Metro Manila garbage to Marikina had been officially denied.

But yesterday, Marikina residents vowed to fight tooth and nail to protect their city from becoming a garbage dump.

Environmentalist Ed Parra, a resident of Barangay Parang in Marikina City, said that he and his neighbors would not hesitate to use force, if necessary, to defend their community should Mayor Marides Fernando insist on hosting a waste facility even on a temporary basis.

Parra said it is already bad that the city is illegally operating the Doña Petra Subdivision dumpsite but "it would be an ecological disaster" if the facility would accommodate Metro Manila's waste.

He said the "Hitler-like tactics" employed by the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority would not cow the Marikina residents into submission, claiming they have enough courage to resist the plan that would transform the city into a wasteland.

Parra said that it is not acceptable to the residents that Marikina would host the waste of the metropolis even on a temporary basis, as Fernando earlier assured.

"We will fight if necessary," he stressed.

Marikina City public information officer Milette Lorenzo yesterday repeated that the local government does not plan to host a dumpsite in the city.

She said the city would only take care of its own garbage.

Parra noted that the city government continues to operate Doña Petra even after it was declared illegal and harmful to the environment by the National Solid Waste Commission (NSWC).

He also accused Mayor Fernando of having consistently ignored the closure order on Doña Petra issued by the commission.

The dumpsite, just 200 meters away from the Marikina River, was declared illegal by NSWC director Albert Magalang after studies showed its harmful effects on the environment. The studies also found the dump to be one of the causes of the rising incidence of respiratory tract-related diseases in the area.

However, Lorenzo denied that the Doña Petra dumpsite was operating illegally.

Earlier, the MMDA issued a statement to deny that there's a plan to bring Metro Manila garbage to Marikina because there was no available space for the projected dumpsite in the city.

Wrong rub

By Jerome Aning

FOR rubbing his sex organ against a 39-year-old woman during Mass in Quiapo Church, police on Saturday arrested sexagenarian Antonio dela Cruz of Limay Street, Mandaluyong City.

Senior Insp. Anita Araullo, chief of the Manila police women's desk, said the incident took place during the 8 a.m. Mass at the Basilica of the Black Nazarene in Quiapo, Manila.

The complainant, a resident of Parañaque City, said she was standing at the back aisle of the church at 8:45 a.m. when she felt something hard pressing against her buttocks.

She said she turned around and was horrified to see the suspect holding his sex organ.

She said she was initially dumbfounded and thoroughly revulsed by the incident and could not shout.

But when she felt that Dela Cruz was about to do a repeat rub, she screamed for help, the victim said.

A brief commotion ensued when Dela Cruz tried to resist arrest, police said.

Dela Cruz denied the woman's claim, saying that he could not commit what the woman had accused him of doing because he is a devotee of the Black Nazarene and "would not dare desecrate His Temple."

Charges of acts of lasciviousness were filed against the suspect.

Timely tip leads to slay of robber; arrest of two other suspects

By Agnes E. Donato

A SUSPECTED robber was killed while his two companions were injured and arrested in a shootout with policemen in Quezon City on Saturday night.

The fatality was identified as Dante Goloso, 31, of Iba Street, Sta. Mesa Heights, Quezon City. He sustained gunshot wounds in different parts of his body and was already dead when brought to the East Avenue Medical Center.

His cohort, Reynaldo Marangan, 30, of Vizayas Avenue, Barangay Pasong Tamo, Quezon City, also suffered bullet wounds in his body.

Marangan is reportedly in critical condition and is being treated at the same hospital.

Meanwhile, the third suspect, Elizalde Cardiño, 32, of Cenacle Drive, Barangay Culiat, Tandang Sora, QC, has been arrested. He is now detained at the Central Police District headquarters in Camp Karingal.

Chief Inspector Rudy Jaraza, head of the CPD intelligence unit, said that police received information that robbers were set to strike that night using their modus operandi which involved picking up jeepney passengers and then robbing them.

The police then positioned themselves at the corner of Road 1 and Vizayas Avenue in Project 6, Quezon City, at about 9:30 p.m. Upon the signal of an informer, the police flagged down the jeepney (Plate No. DLV 391).

The jeepney was being driven by Cardiño and had only Goloso and Marangan as passengers. It was plying the Project 6-T.M. Kalaw route.

The sight of policemen apparently alarmed the robbers, who immediately fired at the authorities but hit no one.

A shootout ensued, during which both Goloso and Marangan were wounded.

Cardiño was eventually arrested while a .38-cal. revolver was recovered from Goloso.

GOODBYE, HOLIDAYS
Children enjoy a final fling of freedom at the Quezon City Circle yesterday. It's back to school today. JOAN BONDOC

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Peñalosa officially divorced today

BARE EYE

Recab Trinidad

DID he hurt his left hand? Did something go wrong in what could be his last quest for the world boxing crown which he used to wear?

Gerry Peñalosa, former WBC super flyweight title-holder, will tell all at lunch today.

Gerry will be made to talk to the media in what will also serve as a formal break with his patron and manager, lawyer-sportsman Rudy Salud.

The Salud-Peñalosa divorce will be officially announced today.

Salud, who quit as Penalosa's manager last Friday, will accompany his former ward at the Bayview Hotel coffee shop in Manila.

***

Nothing has been heard from Gerry since he lost a second time to title-holder Masamori Tokuyama in Osaka last Dec. 20.

Salud said he himself had not been able to talk to Peñalosa.

So the lunch meeting, which will also serve as a press conference, should help clear up speculations on what went wrong in Peñalosa's last fight.

Salud explained that the original battle plan was for Penalosa to dig in hard and go for body.

"Live in his opponent's chest," Salud explained the main fight plot.

Unfortunately, the order was not carried out. Peñalosa appeared tentative and indecisive, mainly in instances when he could've gone in for the kill, after having connected stunning blows to the head.

***

Something went wrong, and it will be Peñalosa's turn to bare everything at lunch today.

The affair also promises to be an informal hearing, with members of the media acting as jurors.

Salud, meanwhile, said he was just honoring his vow to leave Peñalosa on his own after his last fight.

Salud said he was now convinced that he was not a very lucky partner and manager for Peñalosa.

Gerry might be more fortunate with other people, Salud said.

***

Yes, Salud explained, Gerry might have actually finished a point ahead of Tokuyama in Osaka.

However, Salud added, the sad truth is that visiting fighters cannot always hope to wrest a world boxing crown by slim margins.

A challenger must dominate, or score a knockout if possible.

You're right, Salud concluded, Gerry failed to conquer.

Salud was quick to stress that this was not the reason for the divorce.

75-year-old man dies on street corner where he slept for 30 years

By Philip Tubeza

JEEPNEY barker Manolito J. Samonte, 75, came to Manila from the provinces to get a better life.

But after 30 years of living in the streets, Samonte died in his sleep yesterday morning at the corner of Leon Guinto and Estrada Streets in Malate in the arms of Maria Lagua, his common-law wife.

Detective Edgardo Ko, of the Western Police District-homicide section said Samonte has been living in the streets of Malate with Lagua for the past 30 years.

Despite the hard life, Samonte only complained of boils in his body, and had been going to the Philippine General Hospital to have them treated.

Yesterday began like any day for him.

Samonte woke up at about 5 a.m. and went to the street corner calling out for jeepney passengers. But he returned a few minutes later, telling Lagua that he felt weak. He then went back to sleep at the street corner and did not wake up again.

Lagua said that she called the attention of a barangay official when she tried to wake up Samonte.

Belgian tourist drugged and robbed by 3 'lolas'

By Philip Tubeza

BELGIAN tourist Annemie Jacken was eating at the McDonald's fastfood in Rizal Park when three "grandmothers" and two other women befriended her last Saturday.

Jacken, who is billeted at Jens's Place in Malate, Manila, said she had no inkling that the women were planning to drug then rob her.

The suspects stole from her P10,300, 120 Euros and $18 in travellers' checks, Jacken said.

But she told Insp. Edgar Reyes of the Western Police District-General Assignment Section that she would able to point out the suspects to police, "especially the ugly one," if she saw them again.

Jacken said three of the suspects who looked old introduced themselves as grandmothers. She described one of them as "very ugly," and their two female companions as aged between 20 and 30-years-old.

Jacken told police that she was eating alone at McDonald's at 1:30 p.m. last Saturday when the suspects approached her and asked if the empty chairs beside her were not yet taken.

She said the suspects then sat down and befriended her.

When Jacken told them she would be going to Banaue, the suspects said that she should travel with them since they were also going to Banaue.

They then left the restaurant together and boarded four jeepneys before they flagged down a tricycle and went to a house where they drank beer.

Jacken said she didn't feel drunk after drinking the beer, but that she had passed out.

She woke up about 2 a.m. yesterday and found herself inside her hotel room, and her money missing.

Jacken told police that she has no idea how she got back to her room.

Police are now hunting down the suspects while Jacken continues her tour of the Philippines.

Police interrogations must be on video, says Manila councilor

By Jerome Aning

A MANILA councilor wants the Western Police District to videotape its interrogations of suspects in sensational or heinous crimes.

Councilor Don Ramon Bagatsing said the move will "diminish (the incidence of) confessions to commission of crimes extracted through force and violence by law enforcers."

He said videotaping the process "will provide a medium for the protection of the constitutional rights of every person under custodial investigation."

The 4th district councilor wants video cameras installed in strategic positions in interrogation rooms in all police stations.

But Bagatsing clarified that his proposal should not be interpreted as "pro-crook."

He said that the victim would ultimately benefit from the practice if the interrogation of the suspect is done properly and free from allegations of violence like torture.

Bagatsing wants all videotapes of these interrogations sealed and made available only when required during trial, for evidentiary purposes, or upon request of the suspect who was interrogated.

His proposal provides for a "control room" independent of police authority at City hall.

All videos and photographs taken inside the interrogation rooms shall be kept in the control room.

The unit shall be manned by persons who shall be tasked to take custody and monitor all transmitted images.

The tapes that would remain sealed will be preserved for at least 10 years.

Tampering, destruction and theft of the tapes shall be penalized with five to 10 years in jail or a P20,000-P30,000 fine.

Security guard shoots waitress

By Jerome Aning

A MANILA policeman was arrested for allegedly shooting a waitress who woke him up from sleep inside a restaurant in Sampaloc, Manila last Friday.

Waitress Maricel Agujot, 21, took a bullet in the face after she was allegedly shot by PO1 Jose Carlos Aleta of the Western Police District-Field Force.

Agujot is now in hospital, while Aleta has been thrown in jail and facing charges of frustrated murder.

Witnesses told police that a drunken Aleta walked into the Greasy Fastfood & Restaurant at 1644 España corner Ma. Cristina Streets before Friday midnight and instead of ordering food slumped on the table and fell asleep.

The restaurant staff let Aleta sleep, but when the restaurant was about to close at 1:30 a.m., the victim approached the lawman and woke him up, according to witnesses.

The suspect got mad, pulled out his 9mm service pistol and shot the waitress in the face.

Laborer killed

By Philip Tubeza

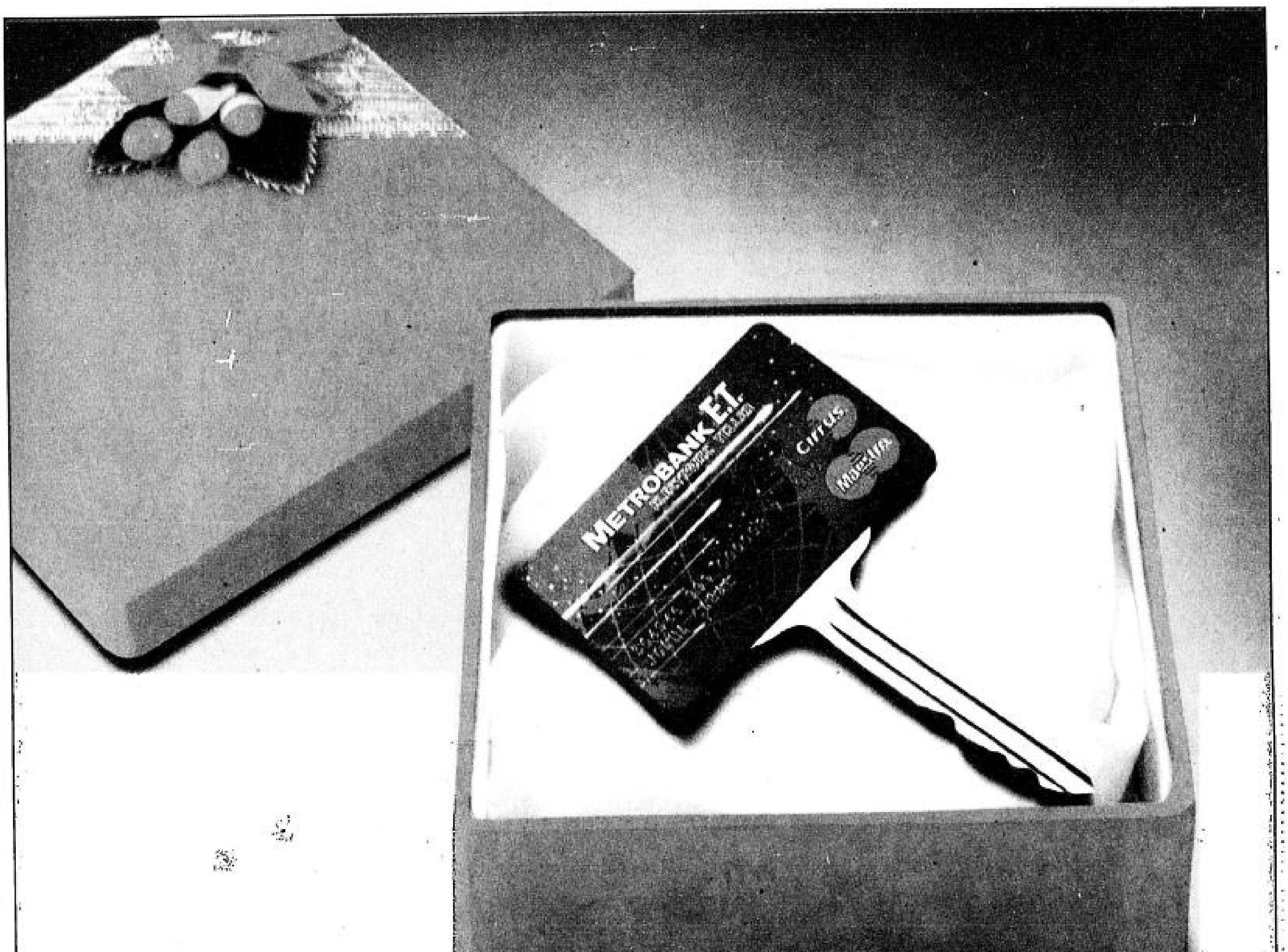
LABORER Renato Baranuelo, 35, was shot dead while he was playing cara y cruz in Tondo, Manila last Saturday.

Baranuelo, of Cristobal Street Tondo, Manila died from several gunshot wounds in the body, said Detective Steve Casimiro, of the Western Police District-homicide section.

The suspects also shot and wounded Efren S. dela Cruz, 54, of Atis Street, also in Tondo, when he tried to help the victim, police said.

One of the gunmen was identified as a certain Roger, 25, dark, slim, and about 5-foot-2 tall. The other suspect is about 40-years-old, fair-complexioned, with regular build and about 5-foot-3 tall.

Police said Baranuelo was playing cara y cruz with his friends at about 2 p.m. at the corner of Atis and Cristobal streets in Tondo when suspect Roger and the other gunman shot him to death, police said.



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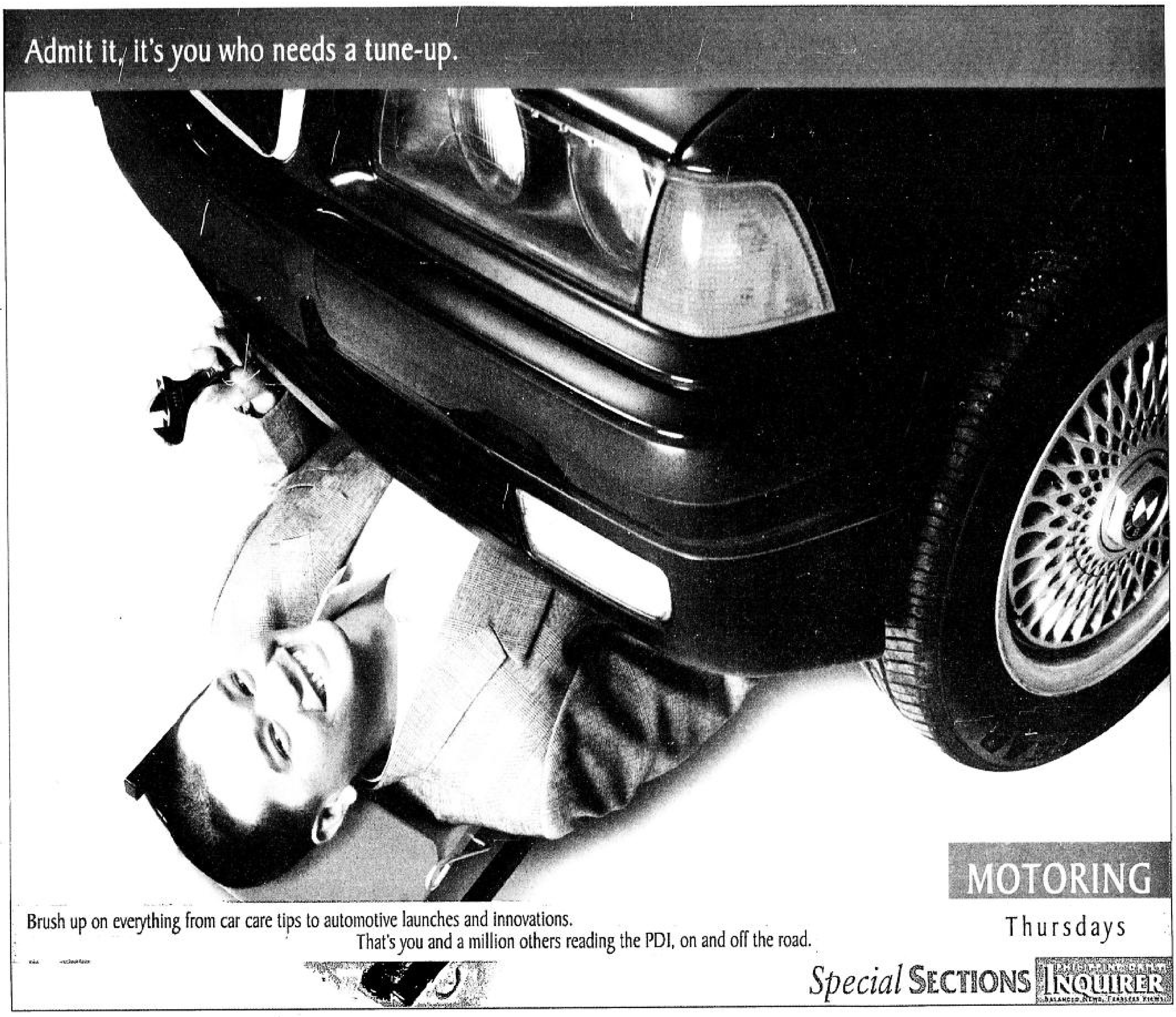
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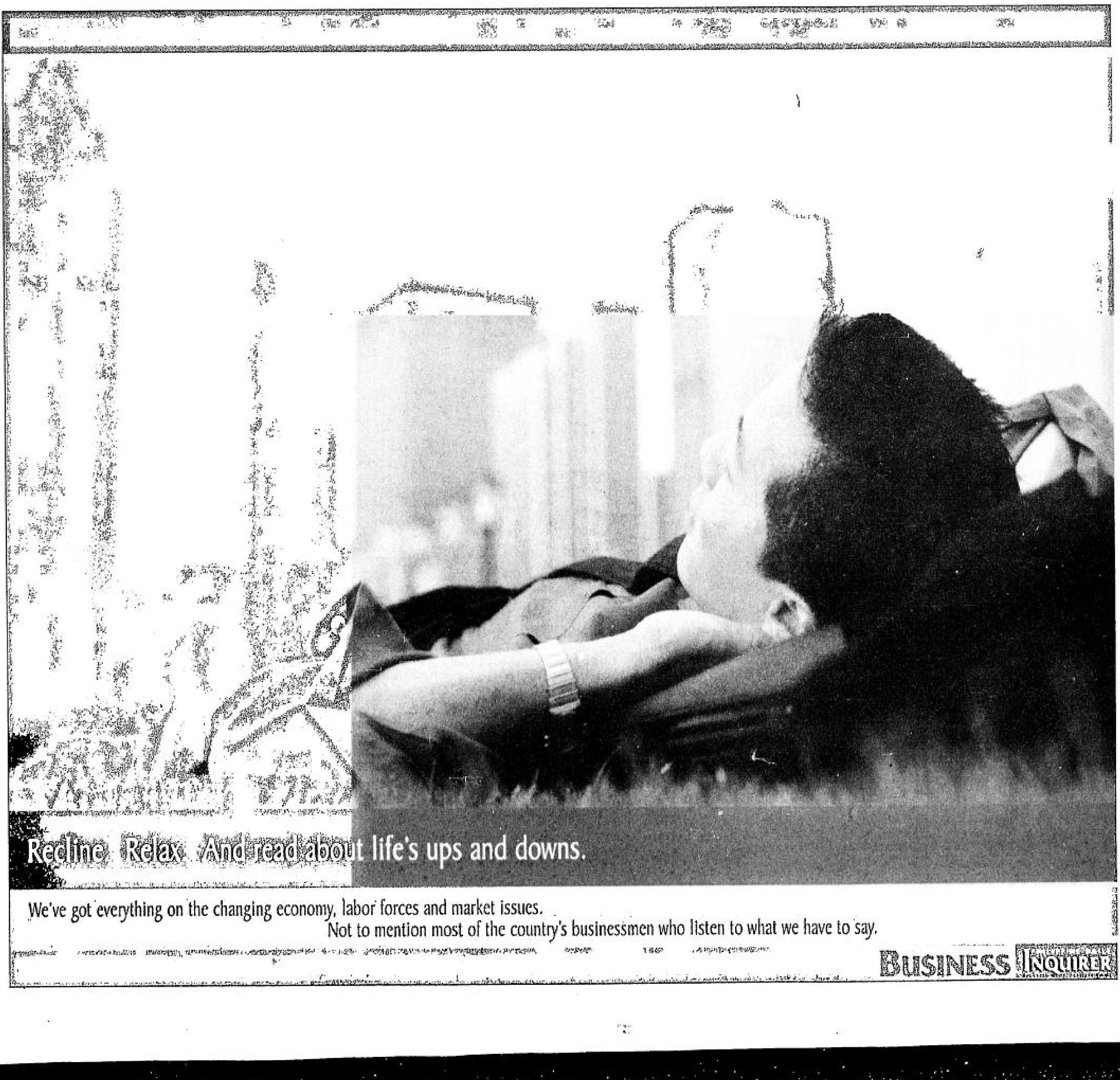
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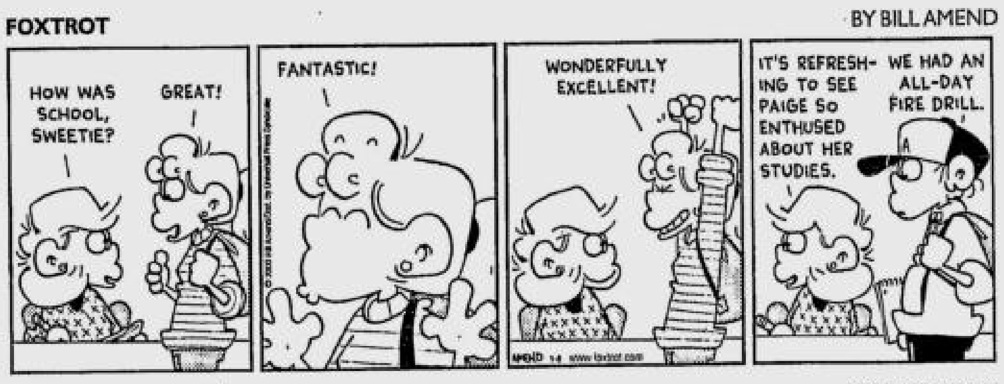
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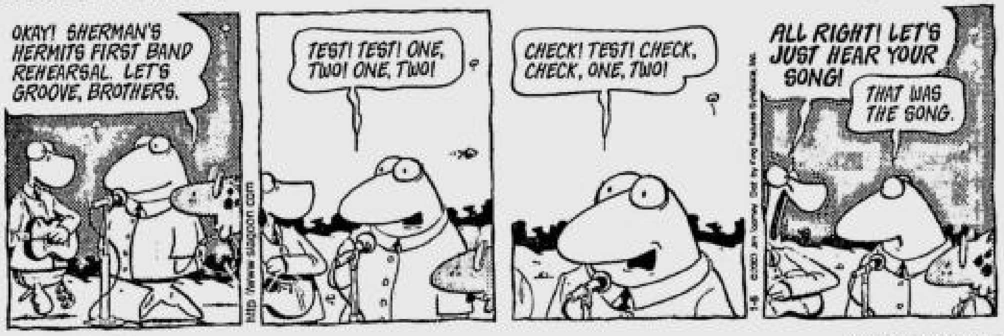
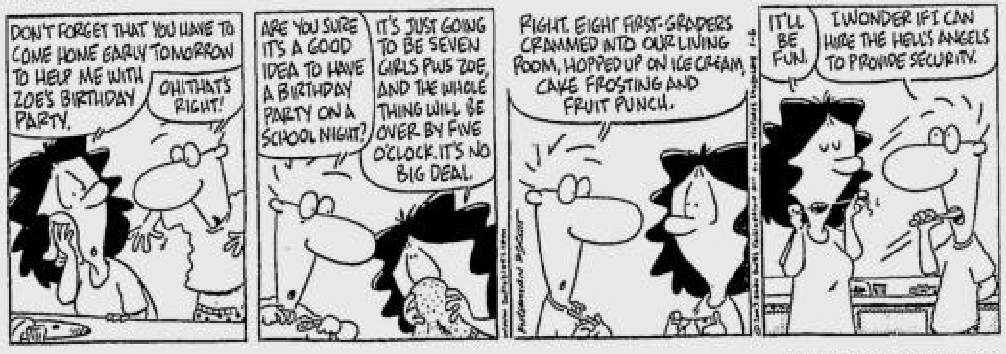
BY JIM TOOMEY


OKAY! SHERMAN'S HERMITS FIRST BAND REHEARSAL. LET'S GROOVE, BROTHERS.
TEST! TEST! ONE, TWO! ONE, TWO!
CHECK! TEST! CHECK, CHECK, ONE, TWO!
ALL RIGHT! LET'S JUST HEAR YOUR SONG!
THAT WAS THE SONG.
http://www.slagoon.com

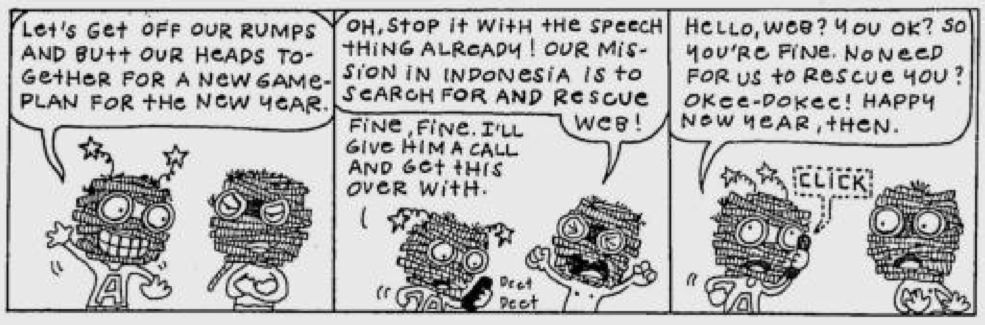
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


DON'T FORGET THAT YOU HAVE TO COME HOME EARLY TOMORROW TO HELP ME WITH ZOE'S BIRTHDAY PARTY.
OH! THAT'S RIGHT!
ARE YOU SURE IT'S A GOOD IDEA TO HAVE A BIRTHDAY PARTY ON A SCHOOL NIGHT?
IT'S JUST GOING TO BE SEVEN GIRLS PLUS ZOE, AND THE WHOLE THING WILL BE OVER BY FIVE O'CLOCK. IT'S NO BIG DEAL.
RIGHT. EIGHT FIRST-GRADERS CRAMMED INTO OUR LIVING ROOM, HOPPED UP ON ICE CREAM, CAKE FROSTING AND FRUIT PUNCH.
IT'LL BE FUN.
I WONDER IF I CAN HIRE THE HELL'S ANGELS TO PROVIDE SECURITY.

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


Let's Get OFF OUR RUMPS AND BUtt OUR HEADS TOGetHER FOR A NeW GAME-PLAN FOR tHe NeW YeAR.
OH, Stop it With the speech thing already! Our mission in Indonesia is to search for and rescue Web!
Fine, Fine. I'll give him a call and get this over with.
Beet Beet
Hello, Web? You ok? So you're fine. No need for us to rescue you? Okee-dokee! Happy New Year, then.
CLICK

HOROSCOPE

BY EUGENIA LAST

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Danny Pintauro, Danny Thomas, Joey Lauren Adams, Bonnie Franklin

Happy Birthday: Take stock of your situation. You will have the strength and courage to follow through with what you feel in your heart is necessary. If you are determined to make a difference, you will be successful. This will not be the year to give in to others or to fold under pressure. Your numbers are 18, 21, 29, 37, 44, 46

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Don't hold a grudge because of a joint venture that resulted in a loss. You can stabilize your life if you take control, talk about issues and refuse to let anyone take advantage of your good nature.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): You will gain respect if you have been pursuing your dreams instead of spinning your wheels. Try not to get annoyed with someone who doesn't have your vision.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Put your charming manner and intelligent outlook to work for you. Your ideas are sound and you will be able to get backing from someone who believes in you.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Spend more time with people who share the same interests as you. Changes in your attitude will help you to get along better with others. Rid yourself of the things that no longer have any value to you.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): You may find that you face a tense situation today. Try not to reveal your true feelings. A close friend should be able to help you out.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): You may have to do some fast talking if you haven't been completely up front. A family member will be unpredictable today. Listen to the complaints and try to resolve matters swiftly.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): You may have to deal with domestic problems today. Use caution if you plan to work with electrical tools. Avoid getting into a heated debate with someone who is just looking for a fight.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): You may be up for some love and romance, but make sure that whomever you plan to be with is of the same frame of mind. If you are too forceful in your approach, you may find that you have to defend yourself.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): In the long run, it is best to keep your thoughts to yourself today. Confrontations will end up causing more grief than you anticipate.

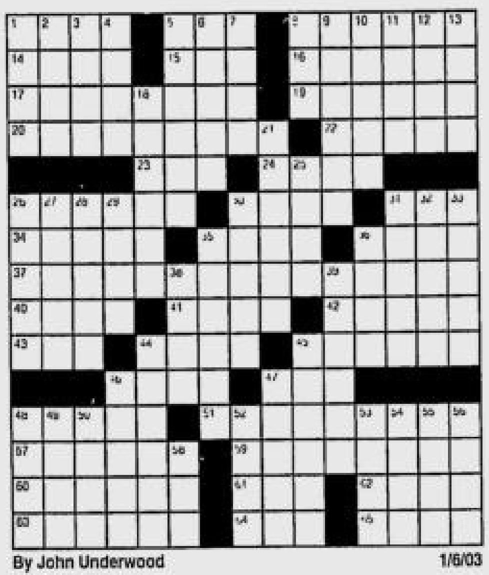
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Moneymaking ventures will pay off if you follow the proper channels. You can get help from prominent individuals if you present your intentions properly.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Stop procrastinating and start to make some headway. Self-improvement projects will be successful if you begin today. It is time to revamp your image.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Don't get too sentimental about the problems you're experiencing with close friends. It may be time to make some new friends and move on to new pastimes.

Birthday Baby: You will be sensitive, yet strong. You will endure whatever comes your way. You will be loyal, loving and will take pride in all that you do.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By John Underwood
Queens, NY

1/6/03

ACROSS
1 Coaster with runners
5 Flag thrower
8 "__ 17"
14 Luau dance
15 Lunched
16 Make it big
17 In working order
19 Chalklike crayon
20 Matriarchal royals?
22 Activists
23 Bern's river
24 Door sign
26 Potent
30 Docking site
31 Use the Singer
34 Auto model
35 Fisherman's yarn
36 Draped dress
37 Cold southern royals?
40 Intense longing
41 Abacus unit
42 Knot over
43 Linguistic suffix
44 Lots and lots
45 More comfy
46 Ancestral chart
47 Coin to Balzac
48 Albert of "Green Acres"
51 Cold northern royals?
57 Fundamental
59 Friendliness
60 Commit capital
61 Novelist Levin
62 Inclination
63 Egged on
64 Wine description
65 Tips

DOWN
1 Laker O'Neal
2 Humdinger
3 Vogue competitor
4 Challenge
5 Motley collection
6 Imaginary substance
7 Gala celebration
8 Nitwit
9 Merchant
10 Heated crime?
11 Diet word
12 Maintain
13 Congeals
18 Comparatively senseless
21 Made dirty
25 Hammer head
26 Tableau
27 Weighty volumes
28 Indian bread
29 Newspaper page
30 "__ Delicate Condition"
31 Half of Hispaniola
32 Els of golf
33 Skinflint
35 "Jeopardy!" host
36 Red Sea port
38 One of the woodwinds
39 Curmudgeon
44 Travolta movie musical
45 French brandy
46 Watch that "keeps on ticking"
47 Sound of sleep
48 Classic saga
49 First 007 film
50 Operatic prima donna
52 Sacred Nile bird
53 Coronation apparel
54 Closing word
55 Seal
56 Fixes in position
58 Inc., abroad

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

L	E	N	G	T	H	■	O	R	C	H	A	R	D	S
A	M	E	L	I	A	■	B	E	A	U	F	O	R	T
U	P	P	I	N	G	■	R	E	W	R	I	T	E	R
G	L	A	D	E	■	T	I	N	■	T	R	A	D	E
H	O	L	E	D	■	W	E	T	■	S	E	R	G	E
E	Y	E	■	■	C	O	N	E	S	■	■	Y	E	P
R	E	S	I	D	E	S	■	R	A	S	P	■	■	■
S	E	E	R	E	D	■	■	■	B	O	A	R	D	S
■	■	■	E	W	E	S	■	R	E	S	T	O	R	E
A	L	E	■	■	R	A	C	E	R	■	■	S	E	A
T	E	X	T	S	■	D	A	N	■	S	T	E	A	M
T	A	C	I	T	■	N	U	T	■	P	E	A	R	L
E	P	I	T	O	M	E	S	■	W	I	N	N	I	E
S	E	T	L	O	O	S	E	■	I	R	E	N	E	S
T	R	E	E	L	E	S	S	■	T	O	T	E	R	S

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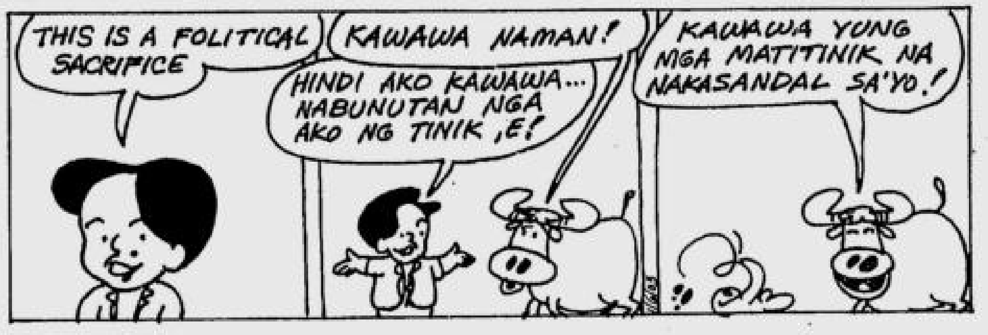
1/5/03

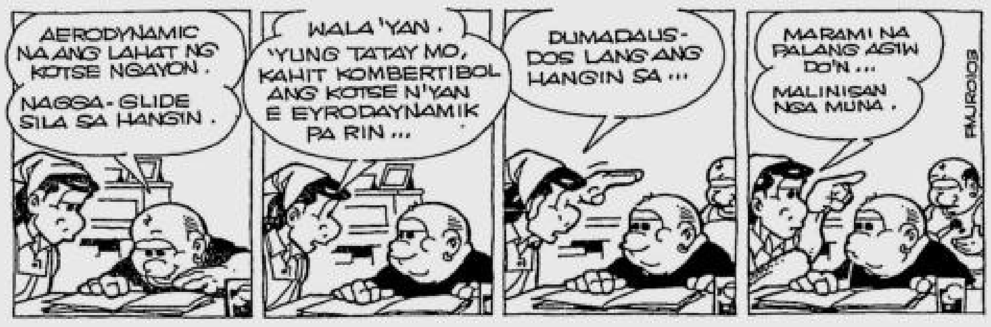
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


THIS IS A FOLITICAL SACRIFICE
KAWAWA NAMAN!
HINDI AKO KAWAWA... NABUNUTAN NGA AKO NG TINIK, E!
KAWAWA YUNG MGA MATITINIK NA NAKASANDAL SA'YO!

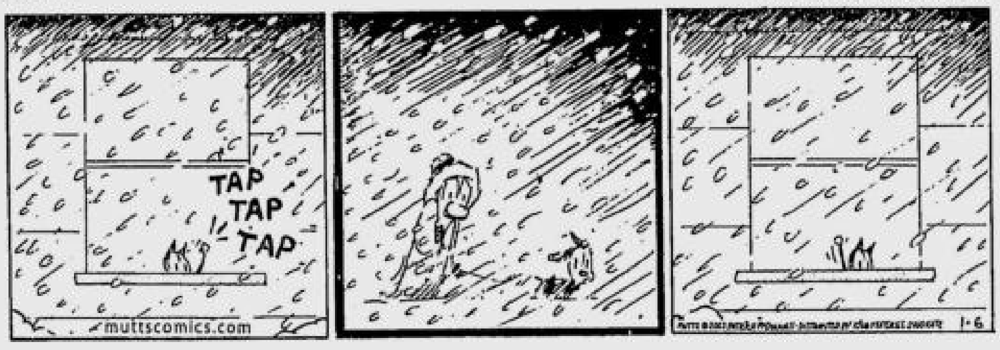
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


AERODYNAMIC NA ANG LAHAT NG KOTSE NGAYON.
NAGGA-GLIDE SILA SA HANGIN.
WALA 'YAN. 'YUNG TATAY MO, KAHIT KOMBERTIBOL ANG KOTSE N'YAN E EYRODAYNAMIK PA RIN...
DUMADAUS-DOS LANG ANG HANGIN SA...
MARAMI NA PALANG AGIW DO'N...
MALINISAN NGA MUNA.
PMJR0103

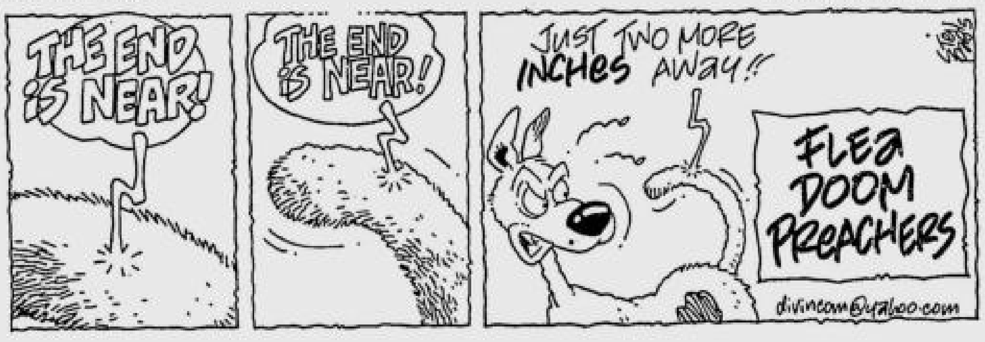
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


TAP TAP TAP
muttscomics.com
1-6

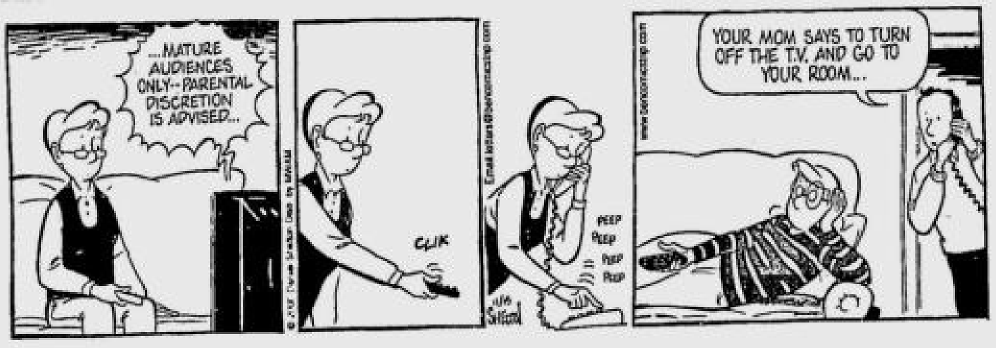
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


THE END IS NEAR!
THE END IS NEAR!
JUST TWO MORE INCHES AWAY!!
FLEA DOOM PREACHERS
divincom@yahoo.com

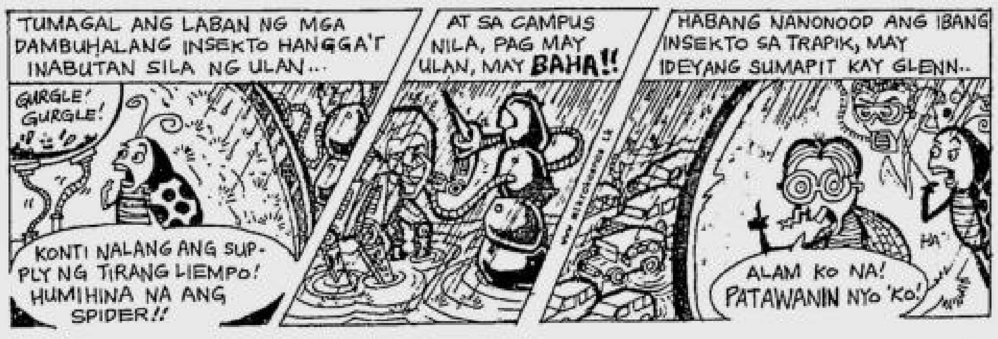
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


...MATURE AUDIENCES ONLY--PARENTAL DISCRETION IS ADVISED...
CLIK
PEEP PEEP PEEP PEEP
YOUR MOM SAYS TO TURN OFF THE T.V. AND GO TO YOUR ROOM...

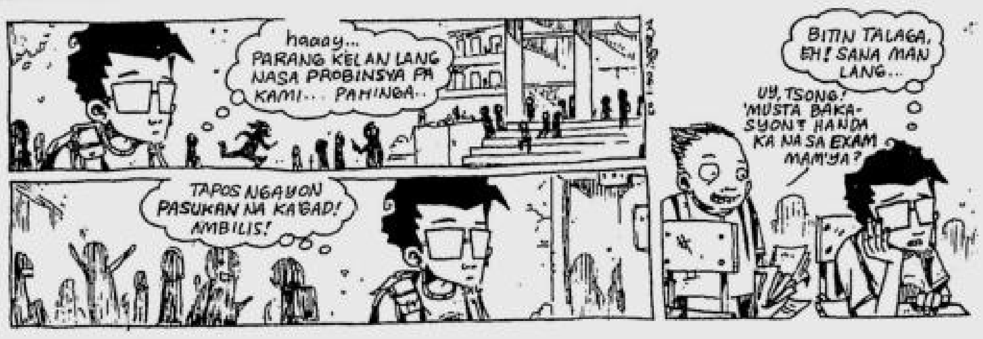
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


TUMAGAL ANG LABAN NG MGA DAMBUHALANG INSEKTO HANGGA'T INABUTAN SILA NG ULAN...
GURGLE! GURGLE!
KONTI NALANG ANG SUPPLY NG TIRANG LIEMPO! HUMIHINA NA ANG SPIDER!!
AT SA CAMPUS NILA, PAG MAY ULAN, MAY BAHA!!
HABANG NANONOOD ANG IBANG INSEKTO SA TRAPIK, MAY IDEYANG SUMAPIT KAY GLENN..
HA
ALAM KO NA! PATAWANIN NYO 'KO!

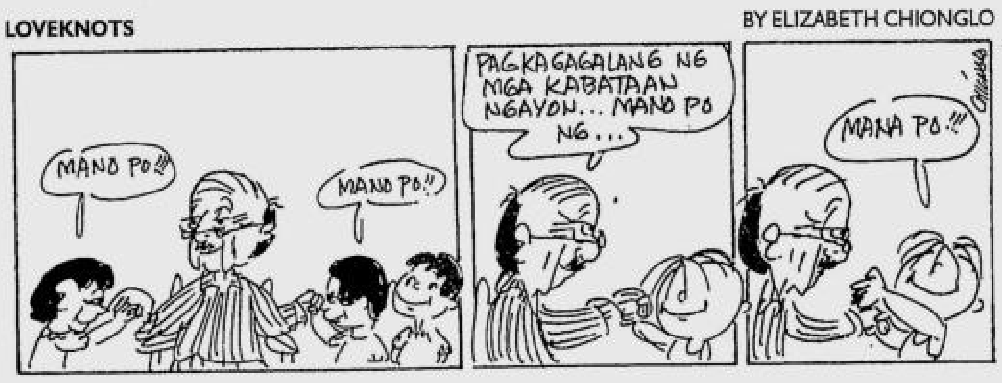
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRÉRA


haaay... PARANG KELAN LANG NASA PROBINSYA PA KAMI... PAHINGA..
TAPOS NGAYON PASUKAN NA KAAGAD! AMBILIS!
BITIN TALAGA, EH! SANA MAN LANG...
UY, TSONG! 'MUSTA BAKASYON? HANDA KA NA SA EXAM MAM'YA?

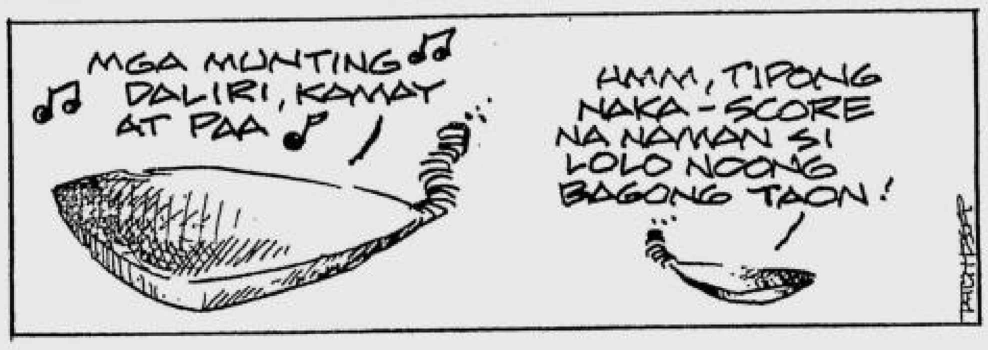
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


MANO PO!!!
MANO PO!!
PAGKAGAGALANG NG MGA KABATAAN NGAYON... MANO PO NG...
MANA PO!!!

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


MGA MUNTING DALIRI, KAMAY AT PAA
HMM, TIPONG NAKA-SCORE NA NAMAN SI LOLO NOONG BAGONG TAON!

For sreening times, call 729-7777.
Schedules are subject to change without prior notice.

AYALA CINEMAS NOW SHOWING

G1 GLORIETTA 1	G4 GLORIETTA 4	GB1 GREENBELT 1	GB3 GREENBELT 3	ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER
1 DEKADA '70	1 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2	1 LASTIKMAN	DEKADA '70 12:40, 3:20, 6:00, 8:40, 11:20	1 MANO PO
2 LASTIKMAN	2 LASTIKMAN	2 MANO PO	MANO PO 12:40, 3:20, 6:00, 8:40, 11:20	2 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
3 ANG AGIMAT	3 DEKADA '70 12:10, 2:45, 5:20, 7:55, 10:30	Onstage JOSE MARI CHAN - HEART OF A SONG WRITER Jan. 17 - 18 / 9PM	LASTIKMAN 10:50, 1:20, 3:50, 6:20, 8:50, 11:20	3 DEKADA '70
4 MANO PO	4 ANG ALAMAT NG LAWIN		ANG AGIMAT 12:45, 2:55, 5:05, 7:15, 9:25, 11:30	4 AGIMAT
	5 ANG AGIMAT		SPIRIT WARRIORS 2 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, 9:30, 11:30	5 LASTIKMAN
	6 MANO PO			
	7 HOME ALONE DA RIBER			

Reserve your seats by texting "SURESEATS G4 (or any Ayala Cinemas) and send to 2333.
Or log on to www.sureseats.com

*GSC: Guaranteed Seats Cinema

MMTA
METRO MANILA THEATERS ASSOCIATION

MOVIE GUIDE
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EMAIL: mmta@asia.com

Filinvest FESTIVAL CINEMA
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72
1 MANO PO
2 AGIMAT
3 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORCUT
4 MANO PO
5 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
6 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORT CUT
7 LASTIKMAN
8 LASTIKMAN
9 DEKADA '70
10 HOME ALONG D RIVER

Pearl Plaza Cinemas
(Parañaque) tel. 853.4486
1 LASTIKMAN
2 HOME ALONG D RIVER
3 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
4 DEKADA '70
5 AGIMAT
6 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORCUT
Golden Pearl THX MANO PO

Masagana CINEMA 1 2 & 3
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 / 833.3274
1 LASTIKMAN
2 DEKADA '70
3 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORT CUT

starmall Movies
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Mandaluyong) tel 724.4986
1 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
2 MANO PO
3 AGIMAT
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX) ALAMAT NG LAWIN
5 LASTIKMAN

METROPOLIS star
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Alabang) tel 850.4285
1 HULI MO HULI KO
2 HOME ALONG D RIVER
3 LASTIKMAN
4 AGIMAT
5 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
6 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORT CUT

M star
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Las Pinas)
tel 873.5004
1 LASTIKMAN
2 MANO PO

PREMIERE CINEMA THX
(Makati City) tel 751.2010 to13
RESERVE

Center Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007
1 DEKADA '70
2 AGIMAT

FCM FAIRVIEW CENTER MALL INC
tel 930.9515
1 LASTIKMAN
2 AGIMAT
3 MANO PO

Sunshine
(FTI, Taguig) tel 838.4301 loc. 3376
1 LASTIKMAN
2 AGIMAT
3 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
4 MANI PO

GOTESCO CINEMA

Gotesco City
(Manila) tel 734.8583
1 MANO PO
4 HULA MO HULI KO
5 AGIMAT
6 DEKADA '70
7 LASTIKMAN
8 HOME ALONG
9 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT

Gotesco Caloocan
tel 362.3508
2 RESERVE

Gotesco Grand Central
(Caloocan) tel 365.7928
1 AGIMAT
2 LASTIKMAN
3 HOME ALONG D RIBER
4 DEKADA '70
5 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
6 LASTIKMAN
7 MANO PO
8 HULI MO HULI KO
9 ALAMAT NG LAWIN

Gotesco Commonwealth
tel 951.0082
1 MANO PO
2 AGIMAT
3 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORT CUT
4 LASTIKMAN
5 ALAMAT NG LAWIN

Gotesco Ortigas
tel 656.6795
1 LASTIKMAN
2 DEKADA '70
3 HOME ALONG D RIVER
4 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
5 ALAMAT NG LAWIN

Universal
(Manila) tel 733.2470
1 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT

Sampaguita
(Cubao) tel 911.7888
1 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT

Dilson
(Manila) tel 734.7724
Dilson ALAMAT NG LAWIN
Lords AGIMAT
Jennet MANO PO

MARKETPLACE
Mandaluyong
tel 533.3851 / 533.3856
1 LASTIKMAN
2 MANO PO
3 HOME ALONG D RIVER
4 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT

Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto
SUPER CINERAMA
tel 733.4238
1 AGIMAT
2 MANO PO
3 LASTIKMAN
4 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
5 ALAMAT NG LAWIN

FRC Cinema
(Talaba Bacoor Cavite)
1 AGIMAT
2 HOME ALONG D' RIBER

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029
1 LASTIKMAN
2 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORT CUT

THE CENTER OF ENTERTAINMENT
Araneta

MALL CINEPLEX 7
tel 911.3101 loc. 821.8242.8400
1 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORT CUT
2 AGIMAT
3 MANO PO
4 LASTIKMAN
5 DEKADA '70
6 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
7 HOME ALONE DA RIBER

FarmersPlaza CINEMAS
tel 911.3101 loc. 821.8242.8400
1 LASTIKMAN
2 AGIMAT

CINEMA 2000

Cinema 2000 Target Mall
(Sta. Rosa Laguna)
tel (049) 534.2185 , 534.2198
1 LASTIKMAN
2 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
3 MANO PO

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383
1 MANO PO
2 LASTIKMAN
3 DEKADA '70
4 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel (049) 411.1146
1 MANO PO
2 AGIMAT
3 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORCUT
4 LASTIKMAN

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
1 MANO PO
2 LASTIKMAN
3 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORT CUT
4 RESERVE

Cinema 2000 MetroTown
(Tarlac) tel(045) 982.1729
1 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
2 LASTIKMAN
3 AGIMAT
4 MANO PO

Magic Star Cinema
(Tarlac City) tel (045) 611.4305
1 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
2 LASTIKMAN
3 MANO PO

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276
1 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
2 AGIMAT
3 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
4 LASTIKMAN

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
1 HOME ALONG D RIBER
2 AGIMAT
3 LASTIKMAN
4 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
5 HULI MO HULI KO

Olivarez Tri-Cinema
(Biñan) tel (049) 511.8883
1 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
2 LASTIKMAN
3 HOME ALONG D RIBER

Olivarez Los Baños
tel (049) 249.2558
1 HOME ALONG D RIBER
2 LASTIKMAN
3 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT

Mega Center Mall
(Cabanatuan City) tel (044) 463.3283
1 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
2 DEKADA '70
3 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
4 AGIMAT

Cabuyao
(Laguna City) tel (049) 531.4808
1 AGIMAT
2 LASTIKMAN

Emperor
(Rosario Cavite) tel (046) 438.1657
1 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
2 LASTIKMAN
3 MANO PO

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0730
1 MANO PO
2 AGIMAT
3 DEKADA '70
4 ALAMAT NG LAWIN

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03
1 AGIMAT
2 MANO PO
3 DEKADA '70
4 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT

Cine Nepo Mall
(Angeles City) tel (045) 322-3571
1 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
2 MANO PO
3 AGIMAT
4 LASTIKMAN

*Movies are subject to change without prior notice

ADVANCED SCREENING THX DOLBY dts SDDS

FESTIVAL CINEMA
Level 4
Festival Supermall
Filinvest - Alabang
Tel. 85035-71 to 72

SM CINEMA
SM Dial-A-Movie Tel. 833-9999
NOW SHOWING

SM CITY BACOOR
4173868
1 HULA MO, HULI KO
2 HOME ALONE DA RIBER
3 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
4 MANO PO
5 AGIMAT
6 LASTIKMAN
7 DEKADA '70
8 ALAMAT NG LAWIN

SM CENTERPOINT
7149522 -7161416
1 LASTIKMAN
2 HOME ALONE DA RIBER
3 MANO PO
4 DEKADA '70
5 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
6 HULA MO, HULI KO
7 AGIMAT
8 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
9 LASTIKMAN
10 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
9350749
1 HULA MO, HULI KO
2 DEKADA '70
3 HOME ALONE DA RIBER
4 AGIMAT
5 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
6 LASTIKMAN
7 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
8 LASTIKMAN
9 MANO PO
10 LAPU LAPU
11 LASTIKMAN
12 ALAMAT NG LAWIN

SM CITY MANILA
5239240
1 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
2 MANO PO
3 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
4 LASTIKMAN
5 DEKADA '70
6 AGIMAT
7 HOME ALONE DA RIBER
8 LAPU LAPU
9 LASTIKMAN
10 HULA MO, HULI KO
11 MANO PO
12 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2

SM MEGAMALL
6331801 • 6329401
1 MANO PO
2 AGIMAT
3 LASTIKMAN
4 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
5 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
6 LAPU LAPU
7 HULA MO, HULI KO
8 MANO PO
9 LASTIKMAN
10 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
11 DEKADA '70
12 HOME ALONE DA RIBER

SM CITY NORTH EDSA
9295452
1 HULA MO, HULI KO
2 HOME ALONE DA RIBER
3 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
4 DEKADA '70
5 MANO PO
6 LASTIKMAN
7 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
8 AGIMAT

SM SOUTHMALL
8096888
1 HOME ALONE DA RIBER
2 DEKADA '70
3 AGIMAT
4 LASTIKMAN
5 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
6 HULA MO, HULI KO
7 MANO PO
8 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
9 LASTIKMAN
10 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2

SM CITY CEBU
2313878
1 MANO PO
2 AGIMAT
3 HOME ALONE DA RIBER
4 DEKADA '70
5 LASTIKMAN
6 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
7 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
8 MANO PO

SM CITY ILOILO
3209422
1 DEKADA '70
2 CLOSED
3 AGIMAT
4 MANO PO
5 LASTIKMAN
6 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
7 CLOSED
8 HOME ALONE DA RIBER

SM CITY PAMPANGA
7128015
1 LASTIKMAN
2 AGIMAT
3 MANO PO
4 DEKADA '70
5 HOME ALONE DA RIBER
6 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2

SM SUPER CTR. SUCAT
8294975
1 AGIMAT
2 LASTIKMAN
3 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
4 MANO PO

SM CINEMA TUTUBAN
2514302
1 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
2 LASTIKMAN
3 MANO PO
4 AGIMAT

SM CITY DAVAO
2976998
1 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
2 HOME ALONE DA RIBER
3 MANO PO
4 DEKADA '70
5 LASTIKMAN
6 AGIMAT

SM BICUTAN
1 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
2 MANO PO
3 LASTIKMAN
4 AGIMAT

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO
1 AGIMAT
2 LASTIKMAN
3 MANO PO
4 HOME ALONE DA RIBER

THE PODIUM CINEMA
18 ADB Avenue Ortigas Center Mandaluyong City
633-6970

1 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
10:50 FS/11:20 MF/1:30/3:40/5:50/8:00/
9:40 LFS/10:10 LMF/11:50 END

2 MANO PO
10:50 FS/11:20 MF/2:00/4:40/7:20/
9:35 LFS/10:00 LMF/12:15 END

LATE NIGHT SCREENING DURING FRIDAYS AND SATURDAYS
Matinee : P100.00 • Screening until 5pm • Monday thru Friday
Regular Rate : P120.00 • After 5pm • Saturday • Sunday • Holidays (Reserved Seating)

Movies are subject to change without prior notice

MOVIEWORLD CINEMAS
@ Robinsons Malls
call-a-movie: 536- 7812
NOW SHOWING

Galleria 632- 9115- 16 / 633- 7641 loc. 279
THX SPIRIT WARRIOR
2 HOME ALONG THE RIBER
3 MANO PO
4 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
5 AGIMAT
6 DEKADA '70
7 LAPU-LAPU
8 LASTIKMAN
9 DEKADA '70
10 HULA MO HULI KO

MATINEE PRICE:P80THX cinema / P65 1level cinemas
Mon.- Fri. / 10am- 4pm (EXCEPT HOLIDAYS)

Ermita 536 -7809- 12
1 AGIMAT
2 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
3 DEKADA '70
4 SPIRIT WARRIORS
5 MANO PO
6 HOME ALONE DA RIBER
7 LASTIKMAN

Metro East - Marcos hway 682- 8193 / 8280
1 AGIMAT
2 HOME ALONE DA RIBER
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4 DEKADA '70
5 HULA MO HULI KO
6 MANO PO
7 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
8 SPIRIT WARRIORS

Novaliches 935- 3229 - 30
1 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
2 DEKADA '70
3 AGIMAT
4 HULA MO HULI KO
5 MANO PO
6 LASTIKMAN
7 HOME ALONE DA RIBER
8 SPIRIT WARRIORS

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3 DEKADA '70
4 AGIMAT
5 LASTIKMAN
6 SPIRIT WARRIORS

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2 MANO PO
3 SPIRIT WARRIORS
4 LASTIKMAN
5 DEKADA '70
6 HOME ALONE DA RIBER

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3 DEKADA '70
4 AGIMAT
5 MANO PO

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5 HOME ALONG THE RIBER
6 AGIMAT

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1 AGIMAT
2 LASTIKMAN
3 SPIRIT WARRIORS
4 DEKADA '70
5 DIE ANOTHER DAY/HOME ALONG THE RIBER
6 MANO PO

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'Generational' thrust makes 'Agimat' unique

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

IF REPORTED box-office figures are to be believed, on the opening day of the current Metro Manila filmfest, the top-grosser was "Agimat—Anting-anting ni Lolo," with FPJ's "Alamat ng Lawin" and **Dolphy**'s "Home Along the Riber" in runner-up spots. We went to "Agimat" to find out why it was filmfest viewers' early favorite, and these are the findings:

In terms of storyline, the movie doesn't have much going for it. It's protagonist is a 14-year-old student (**Jolo Revilla**) who has an amulet that doesn't work. Thus, he becomes the object of demeaning insults from his schoolmates.

To activate the Agimat given to him by his late father, he must seek the help of an old hermit (played by Jolo's grandfather, **Ramon Revilla**), who subjects him to some tests. When the boy emerges victorious, the amulet reacquires its true powers.

Its young owner is made to see that the magic amulet contains two other "versions" of himself—a powerful fighter played by Jolo's dad, **Bong Revilla**, and a "mini-me" whirling dervish portrayed by child actor **Goyong**.

These two alter-egos help Jolo save the populace from evil threats like a predatory *manananggal* (**Mylene Dizon**) and a long-dead member of devilish royalty (**Nancy Castilione**).

This slim material is buttressed by occasional well-made special effects that call to mind some foreign models, but these are too few to make the movie come together in a big way.

So, why do viewers patronize this MMFF entry above all others? The special effects are a major draw—local viewers must be impressed with their being at par in terms of technical execution with some of their foreign models.

Another draw is the movie's strong fantasy element, which pulls in the child and family audiences, thus accounting for more than the usual number of viewers watching the production.

Third, the "generational" thrust that makes this film unique in the filmfest. It's heartening to see three generations of the Revilla show biz family all acting in the same film—a "handing down of the tradition" theme that resonates with Filipino viewers.

On point of fact, however, Ramon's participation consists only of a few scenes, and Bong appears only to advice or save his young son from his ghoulish foes. So, the movie properly belongs to Jolo, whose career as a young star is launched in a big way by this production.

How lucky can a 14-year-old get? If you're the son of Bong Revilla and **Lani Mercado**—very! Does he deserve the big showcase? Well, he tends to contort his face excessively in emotional scenes, but he has an easy charm that serves him well as the young protagonist in this, his launching film.

But, does he deserve all this big time attention? Uh, not yet. Even as a teen action star, his physically-demanding scenes here are minimal, so the film's popularity as an action-fantasy-adventure production is largely the result of its special effects and fantasy elements.

Editing is also employed more strongly here than in other productions. Fast intercutting is used to jazz up slow scenes, and elementals like Mariang Makiling are made to come off as ethereal by dissolving between different shots of them, suggesting that they have a tempo and time frame all their own.

This is an interesting device, but it's used so often that it quickly overstays its welcome. Pretty much the same thing can be said for this production as a whole.

'Blow'

IN THE 1970's, a high-school football star named George Jung surprised the underworld by becoming the world's top importer of cocaine. "Blow," which will be screened on the Cinemax channel at 9 p.m. on Jan. 19, takes a hard look at Jung's spectacular rise and fall, and at how powder cocaine became America's biggest problem.

Jung is played by **Johnny Depp**, and his materialistic wife is portrayed by **Penelope Cruz**. Other important players are **Jordi Molla** as Diego Delgado, an inmate who introduces Jung to Pablo Escobar, (**Cliff Curtis**), the billionaire godfather of international cocaine trafficking.

Pearl Harbor specials

AT 8 P.M. on Jan. 11, the National Geographic Channel presents "Pearl Harbor: Legacy Attack," 60 years after fire and death rained down from the sky as Japanese warplanes attacked American forces in Hawaii.

Then, at 9 p.m., NGC follows up with "Pearl Harbor: Beyond the Movie." The special focuses on the real stories, heroes and places behind the film, "Pearl Harbor," to give viewers a deeper understanding of the factors that led to World War Two.

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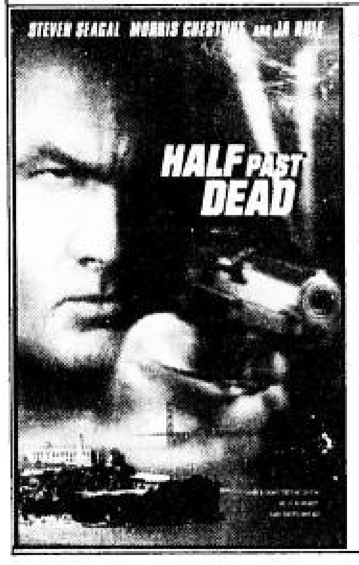
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International action superstar Steven Seagal is back with a vengeance. This time he plays undercover FBI agent Sascha Petrosevitch in the brand-new non-stop, slam-bang action blockbuster from Columbia Pictures, "Half Past Dead."

The California Penal Authority has reopened Alcatraz, the most notorious prison in history. A disgruntled prison bureaucrat-turned-criminal mastermind heads a renegade commando team to infiltrate the high-tech fortress in order to force a death-row inmate to reveal the whereabouts of $200 million worth of gold.

Seagal teams with rap artist Ja Rule to rally the Alcatraz inmates to stop the invaders – before they murder the Supreme Court Justice, who is in The Rock to witness an execution.

The fast-paced, action-packed thriller also stars sexy Filipino Hollywood actress Nia Peeples as a deadly gun-firing, knife-throwing martial artist.

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Ali 3	MANO PO
Ali 4	LASTIKMAN
Ali 5	DEKADA '70
Ali 6	ALAMAT NG LAWIN
Ali 7	HOME ALONE DA RIBER
FARMERS PLAZA CINEMAS	
Farmers 1	LASTIKMAN
Farmers 2	AGIMAT NI LOLO
ARANETA COLISEUM	
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JAN 13 & 15	NCA 7 COCK DERBY
JAN 21, 22 & 24	WORLD SLASHER CUP 2003
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JAN. 5	1 PM / 3 PM / 5 PM
JAN. 7	10 AM / 3 PM / 5 PM
JAN 8	10 AM / 3 PM / 5 PM

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MOVIE GUIDE

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ROBEN	SPIRIT WARRIORS
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TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
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ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET-2	SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
QUEZON-1	LASTIKMAN
REMAR	LASTIKMAN
REMAR-2	AGIMAT
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C	
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CINEMA-2	HOME ALONG DA RIBER
CINEMA-3	ALAMAT NG LAWIN
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	LASTIKMAN
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	AGIMAT NI LOLO
CINEMA-6	MANO PO
CINEMA-7	SPIRIT WARRIOR 2
CINEMA-8	LAPU LAPU
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	LASTIKMAN
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	MANO PO
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	AGIMAT NI LOLO
CINEMA-12	SPIRIT WARRIOR 2
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LORES	
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NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN	
CINEMA 1	DIE ANOTHER DAY
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CINEMA 3	HARRY POTTER
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UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL	
(PARANAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA

E-mail: pr_entertainment@inquirer.com.ph

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Louie C. Camino

'THE TWO TOWERS'

A mind-blowing sequel to the voyage to Middle Earth

WILY WIZARD. Gandalf, played by Sir Ian McKellen (left) with King Theoden, played by Bernard Hill.

By Oliver Pulumbarit
Contributor

REVIEW

WAR has never looked this good nor fantastic.

Peter Jackson's second "Lord of the Rings" installment, "The Two Towers," was screened simultaneously in Ayala theaters weeks before its regular showing.

It's the much-anticipated follow-up movie adaptation of J.R.R. Tolkien's fantasy epic. The term "adaptation" is used loosely. Jackson and three other co-writers have taken liberties in tweaking and translating the beloved stories for the big screen, and they've been forgiven and absolved of this required effrontery when "Fellowship of the Ring" arrived in theaters many months ago.

ROUGH AND TOUGH. Viggo Mortensen as Aragorn with aplomb.

For the obvious reason that print media and film have always been (and will always be) totally different creatures, major changes had to be made for this movie to be feasibly contained in only three action-packed hours.

The previous film also had its share of adjustments, major of which are scenes that involve the lengthening of a role for the Elf-maiden Arwen (Liv Tyler) and highlighting the love angle between her and Aragorn (Viggo Mortensen).

Magnificent

The death of Boromir (Sean Bean) also took place at the beginning of the "Two Towers" book. Notwithstanding, this is very much worth the 12-month wait, a mind-blowing sequel to the magnificent maiden voyage to Middle Earth.

It proceeds directly to the events following the scattering of the Fellowship (the small band of representatives tasked to destroy the corrupting Ring of Sauron), as the treacherous wizard Saruman (Christopher Lee) marshalls his unquestioning Uruk-Hai forces, under his master Sauron's bidding.

Aragorn, Elf archer Legolas (Orlando Bloom) and Dwarf soldier Gimli (John Rhys-Davies) search for the abducted Hobbits Merry and Pippin (Dominic Monaghan and Billy Boyd, respectively).

The other Hobbits Frodo (Elijah Wood) and Sam (Sean Astin), meanwhile, trek to desolate Mordor to destroy the powerful Ring.

Perils

Not everything goes as planned, as the handful of heroes encounter new perils and allies on three fronts. The two central strongholds of evil, Saruman's fortress Orthanc and Sauron's dark tower Barad-dur have been abuzz after their initial, confident attacks on a few human kingdoms.

Gandalf (Ian McKellen), who mysteriously returns, also resumes his mission "at the turn of the tide."

Audiences know what to expect: Big, thunderous battles and hypnotic special effects are a given. Those who've read the books know how spectacular the battle for Helm's Deep is and what happens to Saruman's territory when majority of his lackeys were sent away on a mission.

Certain parts are simplified, and many others are elaborated on. As far as I can recall, the book didn't depict any instances when the Rohan refugees were drafted to fight against thousands of terrifying Uruk-Hai. But that's exactly the strength that makes this movie rise above the typical action-adventure blockbuster: The amazing characterization.

Poetry

In the midst of war, there's poetry. There are very human anxieties that many of its unwilling participants succumb to.

Frodo's despair mirrors that of the people of Rohan's. Most of these necessary enhancements give "Two Towers" its heart and soul, as the book only narrates mostly about the protagonists. The audience feels more involved and concerned, thanks to these adjustments.

Between the swordfights and destruction, the quiet interactions can still pull viewers in.

Even when the "real" book ending is resituated to the next movie, fans of the trilogy won't be able to argue much. There's more than enough slam-bang, sword-and-sorcery confrontations that speak highly of the movie's technical prowess.

Award-winning cinematographer Andrew Lesnie's creative twisting of light sources cast the deceptive illusion of showing objects or characters that wouldn't be seen otherwise in "realistic" lighting.

Top view shots of battle scenes stun dramatically and show a bigger picture of the intricate chaos taking place.

The visual effects are near-perfect. Gollum, the demented skulker voiced by Andy Serkis moves realistically thanks to cutting-edge, motion-capture technology and talented CGI artists. The creature's facial expressions and pores are nicely rendered digitally. But a tiny nitpick—he looks way too smooth and clean sometimes.

"The Two Towers" deserves as many nominations from as many generous award-giving bodies as possible. Being the middle child in the Middle Earth trilogy makes it especially unique. Graceful performances abound from old cast members and new ones like Bernard Hill (as the pained Grima Wormtongue).

"The Two Towers" is a much darker film than its predecessor; but strangely enough, there's humor that comes from the most unlikely moments. It's nervous humor, to be sure, but it's very much appreciated. And by the way, pretty boy Legolas still sends half the audience swooning with whispered yelps.

There's living magic here. It's less foreboding and wondrous than "Fellowship," but it's just as exciting and breathtaking. And it made war look like such an exhilarating experience.

'Lord of the Rings' special effects machine used in 'Agimat'

SHOWBIZ TIDBITS

Leah Salterio

"AGIMAT," the top-grossing Metro Manila Film Festival entry bannered by three generations of Revillas—Sen. **Ramon Revilla Sr.**, **Bong Revilla Jr.** and **Jolo Revilla III**—utilized state-of-the-art modern equipment from production houses to achieve its impressive and spectacular special effects.

One such equipment is the Milo Motion Control System, used for films like "Lord of the Rings," "Gladiator" and other big-budget Hollywood productions.

The only one in the Philippines—and only one of two in Asia—the Milo Motion Control System is owned by Unifex, the new visual effects division of Unitel, the top commercial production company in the Philippines founded by **Tony Gloria**.

Unifex is a brainchild of Gloria, the chief executive officer of Unitel.

Unifex is composed of the best visual effects directors and supervisors, top 3-D and 2-D animators.

With business partner **Jun Reyes**, Gloria visited major manufacturers of motion control in London and Los Angeles to choose the best system. They initially introduced the Milo Motion Control to the commercial production industry. Over the last year, the Milo has been used for some of the most memorable and award-winning TV ads in the country.

Early last year, Gloria started assembling the team that will compose Unifex, led by **Lou Agas**, one of the first Flame artists in Southeast Asia and a veteran of Optima Digital, the leading video post in the country. The group recently moved to Legazpi Village (Perea Street) to accommodate a growing list of clients.

Agas, who trained in London with the Milo machine, is joined by veteran visual effects producer-supervisor **Odette Filio** and **Gary Gardoce**, who is also the motion control programmer. With them is a team of 3-D and 2-D artists headed by **Rainier Pengson** using Maya, XSI for 3-D and varied visual effects software that can do almost anything.

What is unique about the group is their extensive experience in shooting and designing visual effects, not readily offered by other production outfits.

Late last year, Unifex was hired to do several effects for "Agimat," produced by **Marlon Bautista** for the family-owned Imus Productions.

Bong Revilla's action-fantasy-adventure starrer needed some special effects that can only be achieved by the use of the Milo motion control.

With Optima Digital, Unifex created breath-taking effects for "Agimat," never-before-seen in any local movie.

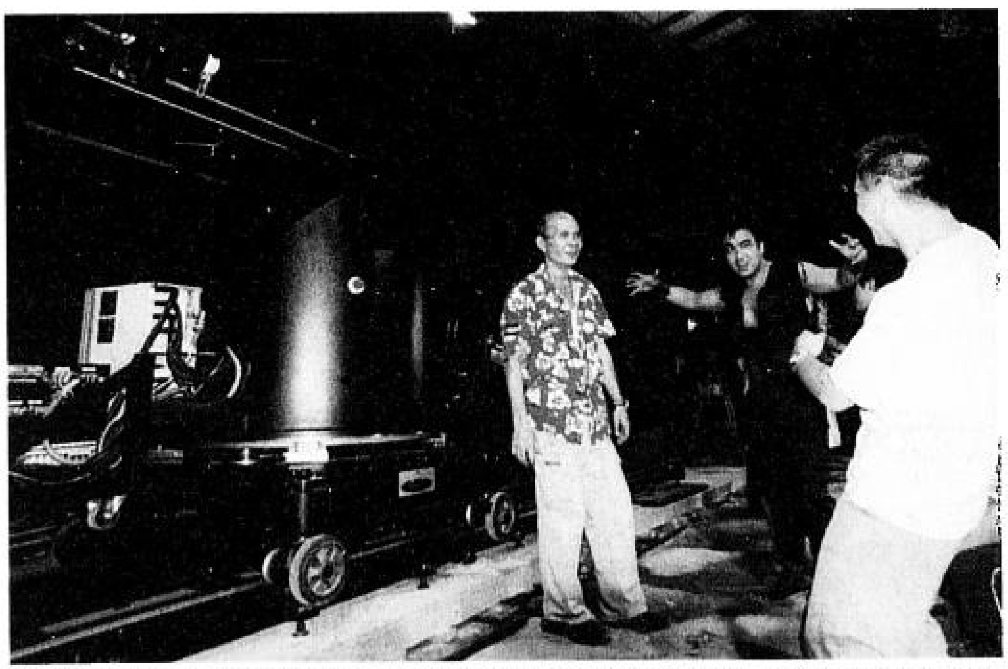
Viewers who have watched "Agimat" noted the effects were indeed impressive and very clearly executed. When the team behind Unifex learned about the viewers' reaction, the special effects experts said they have shown only a small function of what the motion control can actually do.

Gloria said the Milo has not been used like it is used abroad, that's why it is important that the special effects experts are brought into the production as early as possible for them to be able to suggest where the machine can be effectively used.

Unifex is not only motion control and 3-D, as Gloria points out. The machine is operated by people who have credible experience in physical effects like rigs and gadgets. The Milo also has a network of partners in the creation of miniatures, which is often used with motion control.

"The approach of Unifex is holistic," Gloria informs. "It aims to design, organize and coordinate all the other players and artists involved, so that effects will have a look and purpose in the movie.

"It is in mixing the different tools in visual effects that we can create some of the most stunning visual effects possible in our local film industry."


"AGIMAT" SHOOT. Using Milo Motion Control (from left) cinematographer Richard Padernal, action star Bong Revilla Jr. and Gary Gardoce, Unitex motion control operator.

Unifex has also been approached by some producers for possible co-production ventures. Gloria says this is also possible, since the company is interested in getting involved in content creations. It will also help some producers who have good projects to take advantage of what Unifex has to offer.

Having had extensive experience in the movie industry, Gloria did his last production venture with Star Cinema for "American Adobo," shown early last year.

One of Gloria's major objectives for this year is to produce film projects that Unitel directors have developed or are developing.

He is excited about this possibility, since they have been working together for years and they have a system in place.

"More than anybody, those directors also know the capabilities of our technology," Gloria maintains.

Rico joins BBC

BBC
Asia Bureau
HIZON. Time for a change.

FORMER CNBC anchor **Rico Hizon** switches global networks and recently joined the prestigious British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in the latter's Asia Headquarters in Singapore.

"It was eight fruitful years with CNBC, but it was time for a change," Rico says.

At BBC, Rico is producing, writing and anchoring the Asia Business Report on BBC World. The morning updates air at 6:30, 7:30, 9:45, 11:45 and 1:30 p.m.

With this latest move in his international broadcasting career, Rico is excited with the new challenge and attests he is now having fun in his new home network.

Rico has broken new ground again. After he was hired as the first Filipino anchor on the business and financial news network CNBC, he makes history again by being the first Filipino male news presenter on BBC.

Contact Rico through his email address at rico.hizon@bbc.co.uk.

Tenth in the rank

GMA 7 appears to be on the right path to the top. The recent Far Eastern Economic Review's "200 Asia's Leading Companies" showed the network on the number 10 spot as the best Philippine corporation.

ABS-CBN, which consistently made it to the top 10 for the past three years, even ranking third in 1999 and 2000, slipped from last year's No. 5 to No. 11 last year.

The advertising slump and the other problems being faced by the Lopez Group could be blamed for the fall, so the ABS-CBN honchos would surely be scrambling to recover and regain the network's high ranking.

But GMA is proving to be a strong contender to the top spot. It's not one to be easily frayed from the battle, not now that it is fueled by a rising popularity of its programs and an all-out campaign to be closer to the hearts of every Filipino.

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'02 deficit seen lower than revised ceiling

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT is expected to report a budget deficit of less than P210 billion for 2002, or at least P13 billion lower than the revised ceiling of P223 billion, on the back of improved tax and tariff collections in the last two months of the year.

A well-placed government source estimated that for the month of December, the deficit was contained at P9 billion, or much better than the P14 billion recorded in November, due to improved revenue generation by both the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Bureau of Customs.

PARAYNO

BERNARDO

For the 11-month period, the government's budget gap stood at P200.55 billion, well within the revised full-year target but still much higher than the original ceiling of P130 billion.

BIR Commissioner Guillermo Parayno said his bureau had collected P35.1 billion in tax revenues in December, 4 percent better than a year ago but still P2.4 billion below the P37.5 billion targeted for the period.

However, Parayno was quick to add that these figures were still preliminary and that the actual collection figures might be higher once reports were finalized later this month.

"We feel this (P2.4 billion) is a very small shortfall not to be overcome. We feel we will not only meet the target but even ex-

'02 DEFICIT/ B7

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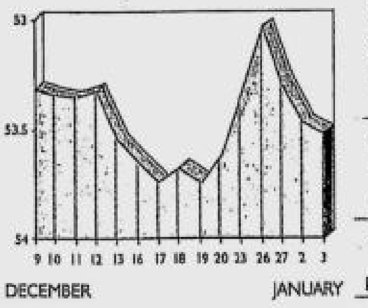

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¥ 119.98 = $1

As of 5 p.m., Dec. 27, 2002

GOLD: $344.50 / 345.00

per ounce Hong Kong, Jan. 3, 2003

Jan. 3, 2003

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United Kingdom	Pound	1.539085	1.594800	85.170300
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.123751	0.128231	6.848200
Switzerland	Franc	0.688152	0.713063	38.081100
Canada	Dollar	0.615672	0.637959	34.070200
Singapore	Dollar	0.553522	0.573559	30.630900
Australia	Dollar	0.543148	0.562810	30.056900
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.560124	2.652801	141.672800
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.257344	0.266660	14.241000
Brunei	Dollar	0.555081	0.575175	30.717200
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000108	0.000112	0.006000
Thailand	Baht	0.022381	0.023191	1.238500
UAE	Dirham	0.262781	0.272294	14.541900
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.036200	55.338300
Argentina	Peso	0.287222	0.297619	15.894300
Brazil	Real	0.273080	0.282965	15.111700
Denmark	Kroner	0.134695	0.139571	7.453800
India	Rupee	0.020126	0.020855	1.113800
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.253998	0.263193	14.055800
Mexico	New Peso	0.093036	0.096404	5.148500
New Zealand	Dollar	0.504451	0.522712	27.915400
Norway	Kroner	0.137707	0.142692	7.620500
Pakistan	Rupee	0.016630	0.017232	0.920300
South Africa	Rand	0.113823	0.117943	6.298700
Korea	Won	0.000813	0.000842	0.045000
Sweden	Kroner	0.109642	0.113611	6.067400
Syria	Pound	0.018739	0.019417	1.037000
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.027859	0.028868	1.541700
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000694	0.000719	0.038400

STOCK MARKET

US-Iraq tension makes market more cautious

THE LOCAL stock market is seen to trade with caution this week as fears of a possible war outbreak in the Middle East continue to outweigh positive developments in the domestic front.

Traders said the market immediately felt the jitters arising from the US-Iraq tension when it reopened after the long holiday break.

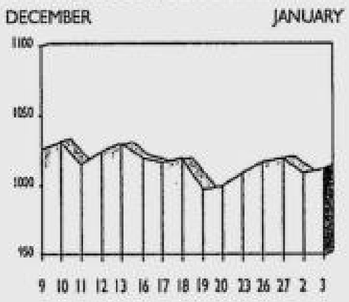
At the end of the shortened trading week on Friday, the main-share Philippine Stock Exchange composite index closed at 1011.50 or 7 points lower than a week ago.

"Iraq war fears remained the main driver of trades abroad," said AB Capital Securities analysts Jose Vistan. The US military ordered last week more than 11,000 troops to begin heading to the Persian Gulf. This is the first deployment of a full combat division of American forces to the area since the 1991 Gulf War.

Together with the Venezuelan strike, the escalating tension in the Middle East has caused oil prices to shoot up, causing serious concerns across global markets.

US-IRAQ/ B4

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B4)

SEC seeks more seats for independent directors

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Commission is seeking to place more independent directors on the boards of companies it supervises.

In a news statement, the SEC said it wanted 30 percent of a company's board seats to be occupied by independent directors.

The commission tendered this proposal as an amendment to the Securities Regulation Code.

The law currently provides that publicly held companies should have at least two independent directors or a number equivalent to at least 20 percent of the board seats, whichever is lesser.

"The amendment increases the number of independent directors to ensure a more meaningful participation and attainment of good governance in listed issues and public companies," the SEC said.

The SEC also proposed a provision that would allow the commission to expand the independent director requirement not only to publicly held companies but "other such entities that the commission shall cover by rules."

The commission also wanted to include a fit-and-proper rule for directors.

RP plans global bond issue

THE PHILIPPINE government is planning a global bond offering within this month to hedge against the adverse impact of a possible breakout of war in the Middle East, a finance official said.

The official said the planned issuance would be a "precautionary move" to raise fresh funds as any offering in the aftermath of a possible Middle East war would be more costly for any borrower.

The government is expected to submit next week to the Monetary Board, the policy-making body of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, a petition seeking approval for a fresh foreign loan, he added.

This developed as the government is expecting a P202-billion budget shortfall this year that will require more borrowings.

Based on its borrowing program for 2003, the national government will source $2.3 billion from commercial sources. The Philippines still has a huge shelf registration with the United States Securities and Exchange Commission, giving the government the leeway to pursue a global offering any time it needs to.

The official did not say, however, how much the government was planning to raise from the offshore bond market within the month as this would depend on the investors' appetite.

The downgrade made by Standard & Poor's and Fitch ratings on the country's sovereign ratings to "negative" from "stable," however, was

RP/ B6

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Planned tariff protection for steel products opposed

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE ALLIANCE of Concerned Downstream Industries and End Product Manufacturers has vowed to vigorously oppose any government plan to provide tariff protection for steel products to stoke investor interest in bankrupt National Steel Corp.

Alliance convenor Raul T. Concepcion said steel was a primary raw material used by a broad range of industries and that a higher duty on steel products would only lead to higher costs and consumer prices.

The government had hinted at the need to provide tariff protection for steel products as part of efforts to resuscitate the operations of NSC.

The Malaysian owners of NSC and its Philippine creditor banks have approved a debt-restructuring agreement, the first step in reopening of the firm's shuttered Iligan factory. Step 2 involves the entry of new investors who are expected to demand tariff cover against cheap steel imports, the main culprit for NSC's closure in 1999.

CONCEPCION

Concepcion said that while he had no beef against the government's plan to revive NSC, it should not be made at the expense of other manufacturing industries that would be forced to pay higher duties for their steel imports.

He suggested that the new management of NSC should concentrate on a few product lines where it could compete head-to-head with foreign suppliers. Before it closed down, NSC's steel products include hot rolled coils (HRC), cold rolled coils (CRC), billets and tinplates whose duties were reduced drastically after the steel company pulled the plug on its operations.

CRC and HRC are currently slapped a 7-percent duty; billets are levied 3 percent, and tinplates are imported duty-free.

Concepcion said the alliance would make a united front to block the tariff protection on steel products similar to its stance against the plan to extend the tariff protection on petrochemical products.

Philexim, US investment agency finalizing $250-M float for Napocor

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE UNITED States Overseas Private Investment Corp. (Opic) is working with Philippine Export-Import Credit Agency on a planned $250-million bond offering for National Power Corp.'s financing needs, according to US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone.

In a Dec. 17 speech during a signing ceremony for a memorandum of understanding between Opic and PhilExim, Ricciardone said Opic's cooperation in the bond offering was part of its continued heavy involvement in funding the local energy sector.

However, he said the bond float was "subject to some action" on the part of the Philippine government.

"The monetary board had to act, but I understand that will be happening soon," the envoy said.

He explained that the Opic aimed to help foster economic development in new and emerging markets.

Opic also helps American business invest overseas by complementing the private sector in managing risks associated with foreign direct investment, he said.

PhilExim is a government financial institution attached to the Department of Finance.

The government had fully covered Napocor's $1.5-billion funding requirement for 2002 with a $500 million worth of yen bonds issued in Tokyo last month.

Early in December, Napocor had also secured a $250-million bridge loan from a syndicate of 15 banks led by Citigroup.

The Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. had intended to raise $250 million through a bond issue in the American market.

In an interview last month, PSALM president Edgardo del Fonso said the dollar bond issue slated for the first quarter of 2003 would instead be used in meeting Napocor's funding requirement this year.

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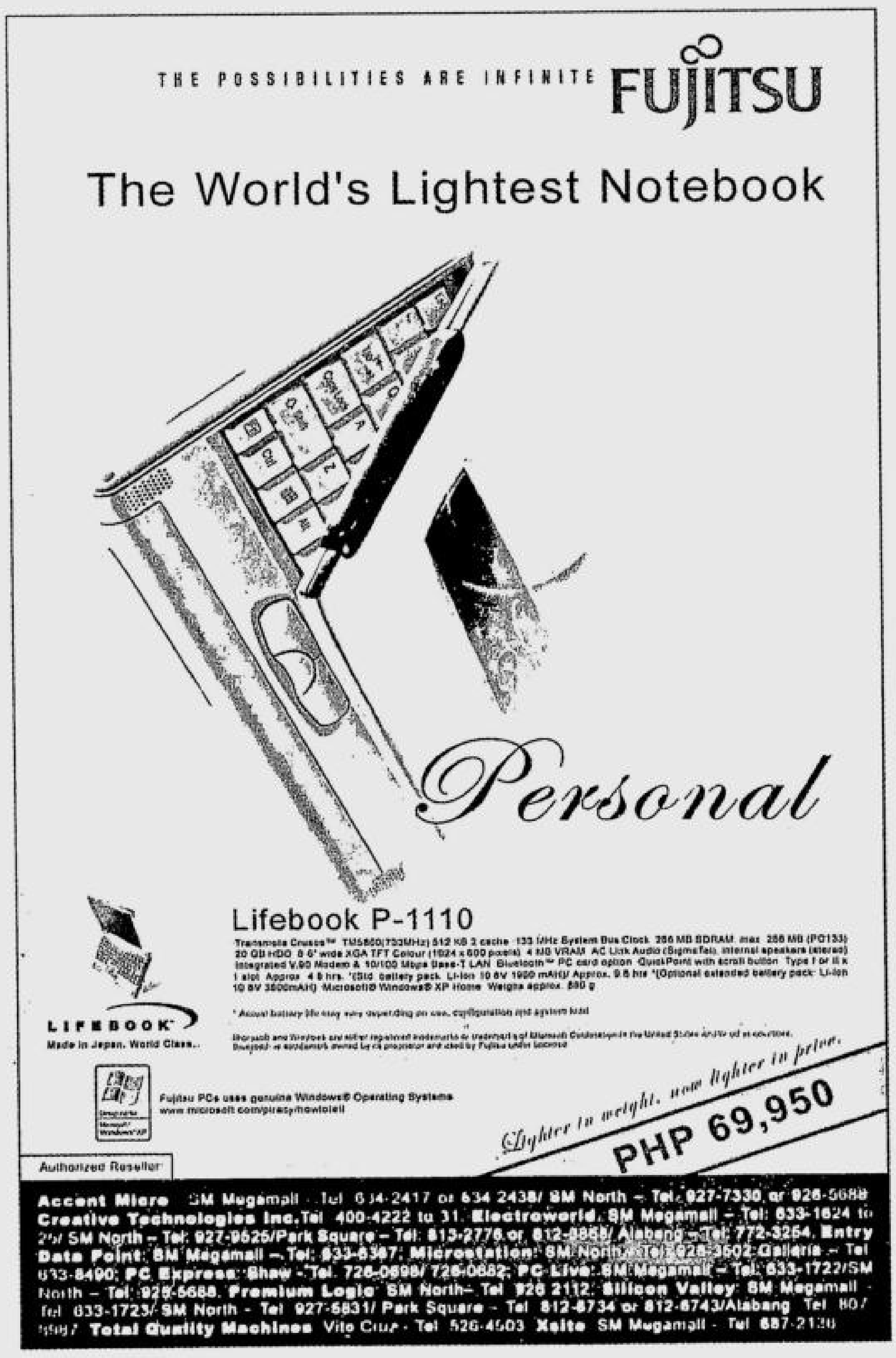
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A better Mindanao in 2003

MINDANAO ONE

Joji Ilagan-Bian

THE NATIONAL Economic Development Authority (Neda) has calculated this year's gross domestic product (GDP) growth at 4.2 percent, slightly lower than the 4.3 percent growth rate in 2002. This estimate, however, is already optimistic since oil prices worldwide are expected to increase in the coming term.

Much of the growth for 2003 will be coming from the telecommunications and retail trade sectors, which are both under the service sector, also according to Neda. While it is expected that agriculture will have its share of accretion, it will not perform as good as the service sector.

A contributory aspect to the growth of the agriculture and service sectors is the relatively low inflation rate in 2002, which was securely fastened within the 4 to 5 percent range. An unwavering minimum wage rate has helped as well in stabilizing the country's inflation figures last year. Likewise, tariffs on foreign inputs and capital goods were lowered to zero at the end of the last quarter.

Mindanao's niche in the national economy has always been in the agriculture sector and this year is expected to be a favorable one for Mindanao primarily due to the efforts of the government to modernize agriculture.

A priority is on the grains program that includes expedient measures to alleviate the dwindling output of corn and rice producing regions, particularly Central Mindanao. Corn is also very vital in increasing productivity in the poultry and livestock sectors.

The National Irrigation Authority (NIA) pledged to increase the share of Mindanao in its budget from 21 percent to 30 percent in 2003. It is therefore fair to envisage that agricultural crops generation would experience substantial increments for this year. Irrigation is particularly essential this year since El Niño is expected to continue to affect the country during the period. However, it is also worthwhile to note that El Niño has been mildly felt by Mindanao's agriculture sector. With an increased irrigation budget, the island's crop production would certainly come out unscathed of the drought's scourge.

The present administration has further reaffirmed its intent to supplement a modernized agriculture sector by improving the supply chain of Mindanao's commodities. In addition to augmenting the infrastructure facilities in Mindanao, improvements in port facilities and the liberalization of the airline industry are already in progress. These are very critical undertakings since inefficient and high transportation costs have been perennially downgrading the competitiveness of Mindanao's products in the local and foreign markets.

Cognizant of this problem, coupled by an aggressive advocacy from Mindanao, President Mapagal-Arroyo included in her seven-point agenda, for October 2002 to March 2003, the goal to lower sea-transport costs from Luzon to Mindanao.

It is always good news for Mindanao when the national government turns its attention to agriculture and Mindanao. But this is long overdue. It is disturbing to note that over a 20-year period, the share of Mindanao to the country's output has been declining from 20.43 percent in 1981 to about 18.12 percent in 2000. NCR during this period, however, increased its share from 29 percent to 31 percent. This can be partly explained by the fact that NCR's gross regional domestic product (GRDP) increased faster than that of Mindanao thereby eroding Mindanao's share to the national output.

The average growth rate of Mindanao from 1994 to 2000 was below the national growth rate as well as those of Luzon and Visayas. The primacy of NCR and Luzon in the national economy has been maintained and appears to continue well into the future.

The aforementioned priority programs of the government appear to benefit Mindanao more than the other island regions. Agriculture is Mindanao's lifeblood particularly among the predominantly Muslim populated regions that are plagued with high poverty incidence. Modernizing agriculture is a key strategy to alleviate poverty, the breeding ground of armed conflict.

I remain optimistic of Mindanao's prospects in the year ahead. Trenchant reforms in its key sector—agriculture—hold potential in alleviating the economic conditions in the island economy. The government's resolve to halt the enduring costs of conflict in Mindanao through building of its economy may in fact make it possible for Mindanao to surpass the projected national growth rate.

Singapore seen seeking trade concession from RP

THE PHILIPPINES is currently awaiting Singapore's reaction to Malacañang's decision to invoke a special provision in the Asean Free Trade Area (Afta) agreement to defer the tariff reduction on petrochemical products covering 11 tariff lines.

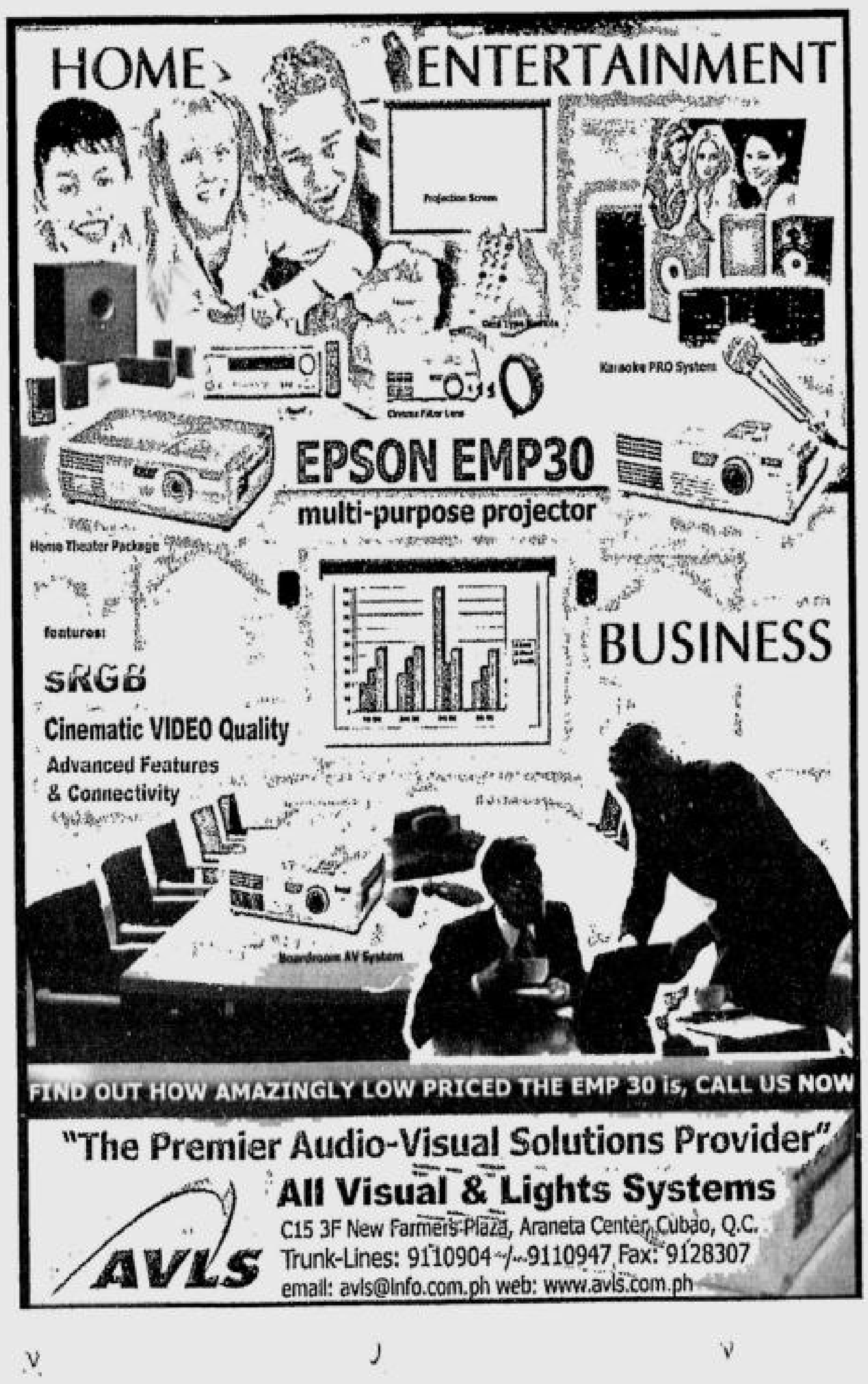
A Department of Trade and Industry official said the government expected Singapore to seek trade concessions from the Philippines in exchange for the delay in opening up the petrochemical industry to Asean imports.

Singapore is the biggest supplier of resins to the country and it has the most to lose from the Tariff and Related Matters Committee's decision to reduce duties on polymers from 15 percent to 10 percent (and not 5 percent under Afta commitments) and maintain tariffs on finished plastic products at the prevailing 5 percent to 10 percent range up to 2005.

The Philippines is supposed to reduce duties on all goods traded within the region to no more than 5 percent starting this year. The rest of the Asean has been implementing Afta over the last 12 months.

The DTI official said Singapore has yet to make its demands after the Philippines officially forwarded its plan to invoke the Asean protocol agreement (which allows members to exempt industries that they deem are not ready for an open trade with the rest of the region) on petrochemical products. The list includes six tariff

SINGAPORE/ B7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Roco's AC-DC swing

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

PUBLICLY, Raul Roco's stance is that he was the prime sponsor of the law that pumped in P10 billion to rehabilitate the central bank.

Privately, though, Roco, the lawyer, wants to wring so much more—P18 billion to be exact—out of the new Bangko Sentral.

Cocktales has confirmed that the Roco law office has quietly been retained by Banco Filipino in its efforts to collect a whopping P18 billion in damages that the thrift bank is claiming against the old Central Bank of the Philippines over the "illegal" 1983 closure of Banco Filipino.

Roco's law firm even advised Banco Filipino that the new Bangko Sentral—created out of the bankrupt Central Bank in 1993—has assumed the liabilities of the Central Bank.

Roco's legal advice was solicited by Banco Filipino in the light of the position of the Bangko Sentral that the Central Bank-Board of Liquidators was specifically created to free the Bangko Sentral from any claimed liability against the previous central bank.

In taking Banco Filipino as a client, the Roco law firm apparently also does not see having painted itself into a conflict-of-interest position despite having previously taken the Bangko Sentral as a similar client, when Roco was still a senator and chair of the Senate banking committee.

Roco and his managing partner, Lorna Kapunan, have refused to even confirm its relationship with the Bangko Sentral despite a previous column on the issue.

Roco's blanket alibi when he was still a senator was that he was, like any other politician in Congress, not involved in the day-to-day operations of his law firm, leaving such mundane tasks up to his partners.

Bobby's Yuletide bash

THE HOLIDAY grinch has apparently taken permanent hold over the landed Aguirre clan.

In a Dec. 23 boardroom sweep, polo player Albert "Bobby" Aguirre struck out younger sister Nanette as treasurer

COCKTALES/ B4

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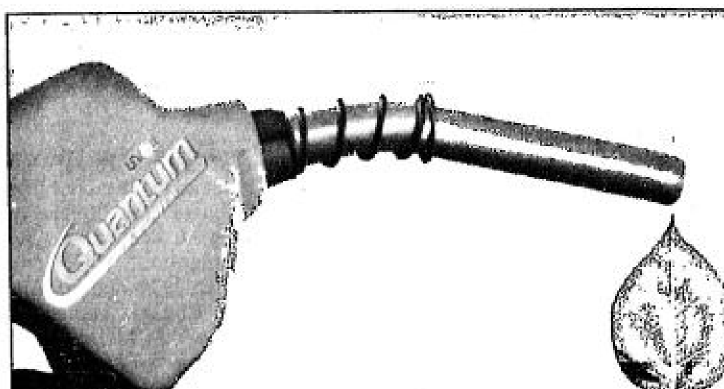

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Send in the clones

I AM 73 today and the editor insisted that I go to the island of Atlantis to have myself cloned. Due to my age and deteriorating health, the paper is looking for an eventual replacement, and while they have no difficulty in finding another financial columnist, they cannot find anybody who can duplicate my appalling puns and terrible limericks. The journey was long but the procedure took only a few minutes and was painless. All I had to do was to donate an egg cell, and the doctor assured me that my clone would eggcell at puns and limericks. As clones age rapidly, he might be ready by next year.

MR. BEARBULL

Ron Nathan

While surfing the Internet, I came across some interesting items. From a Hong Kong newspaper, there is a story of a businessman who choked to death eating Long Life noodles. In Thailand, a man killed his mother by battering her with a mattress and has been charged with matricide. Saddest story was about a male fly that had been spurned by a female. He glued his wings together, jumped off a high roof and committed insecticide.

The strangest story came from a Texas newspaper 10 years ago. A bus conductor, renowned for his bad temper, threw an old man off the bus because he couldn't pay his fare. The old man sustained multiple fractures and died, so the conductor was charged with first-degree murder and sentenced to die in the electric chair. For his last meal, he requested 2 kilograms of bananas. The switch was thrown but nothing happened. The electricians checked the connections and threw the switch twice more but still nothing happened, so under the law he was freed.

Next day, he returned to work and deliberately kicked an old lady off the bus right in front of a 10-wheel truck. Again, he was sentenced to death and on his last day, he requested 2 kilograms of bananas. This time, the state installed a generator, but still nothing happened. After three attempts to electrocute him, he was released. When interviewed, the reporters asked him the significance of the bananas. Looking mystified, he said: "The bananas had nothing to do with it. I guess I'm just a bad conductor."

I have a thought for Christmas. It's only a suggestion: Abolish Noche Buena because it gives me indigestion.

* * * *

LIMERICKS will return next week, but it is now time to be serious. It is customary for financial columnists, brokers, investment houses and research departments to give their view for the year ahead. In the United States, they are invariably bullish, especially after the index has doubled or tripled, and they recommend the stocks they have been told to push. The result is a New Year rally followed by a three-year recession. This time around, after a series of scams, the SEC fined investment houses over $1.5 billion and ordered them to sever their connection with research departments. They also noted that over 99 percent of recommendations were to BUY, less than one percent to SELL. I commented on this when I first started writing for the INQUIRER last March, and I explained the reasons behind it. From now on, we should see more honest opinions and a more even distribution of BUYS and SELLS.

I have been consistently bearish during the four years I have been writing, correctly so, as it happens. I remain bearish at the moment because it seems highly probable that the United States will attack Iraq, in which case markets will fall globally. But the fall should be short-lived, as I do not see a Vietnam situation developing. As soon as it becomes obvious that the United States will win, the markets will rebound, so traders should be ready to move quickly next month. There is money to be made if you choose the right stocks. Thereafter, I am neutral as I feel the market is too low to sell.

The decision of President Macapagal-Arroyo not to run in 2004 came as a bombshell, and its immediate effect on the market was negative. However, this could be a good thing, as she could now concentrate on two urgent problems and leave the third to her successor. The first problem is to increase BIR collections, mainly from large companies. The best way to do this is to set targets for each collector, and if he fails to meet it, transfer him to Sulu. This will get results, believe me. The second problem is to stop smuggling, which deprives the nation of large amounts of revenue. Again, if the collectors fail to hit their targets, put them on traffic duty in Basilan.

The third problem is long-term but ultimately the most important. It is to implement a system of birth control throughout the country. The ADB is giving us $40 million to electrify 7,000 villages in remote areas. This means that doctors and nurses can set up clinics with incubators and oxygen tents so that the mortality rate among newborn babies can be reduced from its present unacceptably high level. They can also distribute oral hydration tablets to babies, who will otherwise die, and they can provide ferrous sulfate (iron) and iodized salt to children, who will grow up stunted or mentally retarded without these supplements. In addition, they can bring in from India, cheap medicines for the elderly to prolong their lives and keep them healthy. At present, the high cost of these medicines is a form of euthanasia.

President Macapagal cannot do these things because she is beholden to Cardinal Sin, without whose help she would never have been inaugurated. Senator Flavier, President Ramos and, possibly, Mr. Roco have no such inhibitions and would carry out these essential reforms. If not, we will have 160 million Filipinos in 2030 and 320 million in 2060. If you think the Philippines is poor, go to India, which has 1 billion people. They may have nuclear weapons and the fastest computer, but every night millions of homeless people sleep on the sidewalks of Calcutta, Bombay and New Delhi. Such poverty is unimaginable, but I have seen it for myself, and that is where we are ultimately heading unless we act soon. I will discuss this further next week. *Email the author at mrbearbull@hotmail.com*

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BAGUIO CC	670K	ORCHARD "A"	Call now	CELEBRITY	180K
CALATAGAN "A"	90K	RIVIERA "A"	Call now	EAGLE RIDGE "A"	260K
CAMP JOHN HAY	270K	STA ELENA "A"	1.5M	FAIRWAYS "A"	250K
CAPITOL HILLS	115K	TAG HLANDS	870K	MIMOSA (INDIV)	150K
CC @ TAG	Call now	TAG MIDLANDS	750K	MKTI SPORTS "A"	Call now
MLA GOLF (INDIV)	12M	VALLEY GOLF	310K	MLA GOLF (CORP)	10.5M
MLA GOLF (CORP)	12.8M	WACK WACK	6.5M	MLA POLO	2.45M
				VALLEY GOLF	280K

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	ASKED PRICE	BID PRICE
ALABANG COUNTRY CLUB "A"	-	1,300,000.00
ALABANG COUNTRY CLUB "B"	1,600,000.00	1,300,000.00
BAGUIO COUNTRY CLUB	-	600,000.00
CALATAGAN GOLF CLUB	70,000.00	
CAMP JOHN HAY	240,000.00	
CANLUBANG GOLF CLUB	450,000.00	
CALIRAYA GOLF	300,000.00	
CELEBRITY SPORTS CLUB	175,000.00	
COUNTRY CLUB AT TAGAYTAY *	350,000.00	
EAGLE RIDGE "C"	460,000.00	
FONTANA "D"	50,000.00	
HACIENDA LUISITA "B"	-	280,000.00
MANILA SOUTHWOODS "A"	500,000.00	450,000.00
MANILA SOUTHWOODS "B"	500,000.00	Please call
MAKATI SPORTS CLUB	-	240,000.00
MANILA GOLF CLUB (Ind)	-	10,000,000.00
MANILA GOLF CLUB (Corp)	Please call	10,500,000.00
MANILA POLO CLUB	2,500,000.00	2,450,000.00
MIMOSA "C"	Please call	-
ORCHARD GOLF CLUB "A"	Please call	
ORCHARD GOLF CLUB "B"	Please call	
ORCHARD GOLF CLUB "C"	Please call	
PHILIPPINE COLUMBIAN ASSOCIATION	80,000.00	
PUERTO AZUL BEACH CLUB "A"	90,000.00	
QUEZON CITY SPORTS CLUB	300,000.00	-
RIVIERA GOLF CLUB "C"	300,000.00	Please call
SPA & LODGE *	-	Please call
TAGAYTAY HIGHLANDS GOLF CLUB	820,000.00	-
TAGAYTAY MIDLANDS *	-	Please call
THE COUNTRY CLUB		Please call
WACK WACK GOLF CLUB	-	6,000,000.00
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Alabang Country Club "A"	-	Pls. Call
Alabang Country Club "B"	1,450,000	-
Baguio Country Club	-	690,000
Camp John Hay	240,000	Pls. Call
Capitol Hills Golf & CC A/B*	113,000	95,000
Canyon Woods	190,000	Pls. Call
Canlubang Golf	455,000	-
Calatagan Golf Club	80,000	60,000
Celebrity Sports Club	200,000	150,000
Club Filipino	170,000	150,000
Eagleridge "A"/"C"*	330,000/500,000*	-
Eastridge "B"	150,000	-
Evercrest	135,000	-
Fontana D/C*/A/*	70,000/140,000*/250,000**	-
Forest Hills "A"/"C"	180,000/250,000*	180,000
Manila Golf Ind./Corp.*	12,600,000*	Pls. Call*
Manila Polo	2,700,000	2,480,000
Makati Sports Club A/B*	260,000	220,000
Manila Yacht Club	810,000	-
Manila Southwoods A/B*	550,000/730,000*	450,000
Metropolitan Club	100,000	80,000
Mimosa Golf Ind./Corp.*	140,000	100,000/260,000*
Mt. Malarayat Ind./Corp.*	350,000/450,000*	300,000
Orchard Golf A/ Corp*	Pls. Call	Pls. Call
Phil. Columbian	85,000	Pls. Call
Puerto Azul "A"/"B"	100,000/150,000*	-
Punta Fuego	500,000	400,000
Quezon City Sports Club "A"	220,000	180,000
Riviera Golf "A"/"C"**	130,000/380,000*	-
Riviera Golf "B"	-	130,000
Royale Tagaytay A/C*	100,000/Pls. Call*	-
Rockwell Leisure Club	360,000	Pls. Call
Sherwoods "A"/"B"/"C"**	95,000/Pls. Call*	85,000/70,000
Sta. Elena Golf "A"/"B"	1,450,000	Pls. Call
Subic Bay Yacht Club "Corp"	290,000	-
Subic Golf	145,000	-
Tagaytay Country Club	350,000	330,000
Tagaytay Highlands Golf & CC	Pls. Call	800,000
Tagaytay Midlands	780,000	-
Valley Golf & CC	330,000	250,000
Valle Verde (Indv.)	160,000	130,000
Wack Wack Golf	Pls. Call	Pls. Call

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CLUB	BUYER	SELLER
Alabang Country Club "A" (Filipino)	Please Call	1,500,000
Alabang Country Club "B" (Foreigner)	-	1,600,000
Baguio Country Club	600,000	650,000
Calatagan Golf Club "A"	-	80,000
Calatagan Golf Club "B"		110,000
Camp John Hay	-	240,000
Canlubang	450,000	550,000
Canyonwoods	-	180,000
Capitol Hills	-	110,000
Celebrity Sports Club	180,000	210,000
Eagle Ridge "A"/"B"/"C"	Please Call	Please Call
Eastridge "A"	-	110,000
Evercrest "A"		100,000
Forest Hills "A"		220,000
Forest Hills "B"	-	250,000
Forest Hills "C"	Please Call	280,000
Makati Sports Club "A"	220,000	275,000
Makati Sports Club "B"	Please Call	-
Manila Golf (Corporate)	10,500,000	Please Call
Manila Golf (Individual)	10,000,000	Please Call
Manila Polo	-	Please Call
Manila Southwoods "A"	Please Call	850,000
Manila Southwoods "B"	-	700,000
Manila Yacht Club	-	Please Call
Metropolitan Club "A"	-	130,000
Metropolitan Club "B"	-	140,000
Mimosa (Individual)	-	140,000
Montemar (Individual)	-	35,000
Mt. Malarayat (Individual)	Please Call	300,000
Orchard Golf Club "A"/"B"/"C"	Please Call	Please Call
Puerto Azul	-	100,000
Punta Fuego	-	Please Call
Quezon City Sports Club	180,000	240,000
Riviera Golf & Country Club "A"	-	Please Call
Rockwell	320,000	430,000
Sherwood Hills "A"	-	90,000
Sta. Elena "A"	Please Call	1,550,000
Sta. Elena "B"	-	Please Call
Subic Bay Yacht (Corporate)	-	280,000
Subic Bay Yacht (Individual)	-	170,000
Tagaytay Country Club	Please Call	360,000
Tagaytay Highlands	800,000	-
Tagaytay Midlands	Please Call	750,000
The Country Club	Please Call	Please Call
Valle Verde (Individual)	150,000	170,000
Valley Golf	Please Call	330,000
Wack-Wack Golf Club	Please Call	6,500,000

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PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of Friday, January 3, 2003)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	18	18	17.75	18	4,900
Bank of the Phil. Islands	34	34	33.5	34	1,707,000
China Banking Corp.	620	630	620	630	490
Citystate Savings Bank	14.75	14.75	14.75	14.75	2,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	26.5	26.5	26	26	20,100
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	31	31.5	30.5	31	111,500
Philippine National Bank	23.75	23.75	23.75	23.75	30,200
Phil. Savings Bank	28.5	28.5	28.5	28.5	10,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	17	17.25	17	17.25	19,200
FINANCIAL SERVICE					
Manulife Financial Corp.	1150	1150	1150	1150	60
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	0.71	0.71	0.71	0.71	10,000
Sun Life Financial Serv.	870	905	870	905	410
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	16.5	16.5	16	16	45,000
Digital Telecom Phils. Inc.	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	560,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	447.5	447.5	447.5	447.5	11,800
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.022	200,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.013	0.014	0.013	0.014	1,100,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.6	61,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	267.5	270	265	270	80,680
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.01	0.011	15,000,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	8.9	8.9	8.5	8.8	387,000
Manila Electric Co. B	9.2	10.25	9.2	10	4,430,000
Petron Corp.	1.56	1.56	1.56	1.56	2,203,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.98	50,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.36	1.42	1.36	1.42	966,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	2.42	2.46	2.42	2.46	101,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	2.14	2.14	2.14	2.14	13,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	18.25	18.25	17.75	18	2,937,800
La Tondeña Distillers Inc.	35	35	34.5	35	3,681,800
San Miguel Corp. A	59	59	59	59	52,200
San Miguel Corp. B	65	65	64.5	65	358,400
Universal Robina Corp.	2.75	2.75	2.7	2.7	3,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Ayala Corp.	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.4	1,540,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	2.3	2.34	2.3	2.34	424,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	1,000,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	5,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.12	0.14	0.12	0.14	16,440,000
First Phil Hldgs. Corp.	8.4	9	8.4	9	1,111,000
Ionics Inc.	0.75	0.76	0.75	0.76	30,000
Megaworld Corp.	0.57	0.57	0.56	0.57	1,200,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.16	0.165	0.16	0.165	2,050,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.026	0.026	0.026	0.026	700,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Interphil Labs Inc. A	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	2,000
Interphil Labs Inc. B	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	65,000
Jardine Davies Inc.	17	17	17	17	1,000
Pryce Corp.	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	3,000,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	11.5	11.5	11.25	11.25	7,500
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	15.75	16	15.5	15.5	2,205,200
Jollibee Warrants	17.25	17.25	17.25	17.25	26,400
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10	10	10	10	1,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10	10	10	10	1,000
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8	5,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	4.55	4.55	4.45	4.45	4,497,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.11	290,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	0.84	0.84	0.83	0.83	380,000
Highlands Prime Inc.	1.96	1.98	1.96	1.98	120,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	4.65	4.65	4.4	4.4	12,071,000
MINING					
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't.	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	50,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	230,000
OIL					
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	10,000

	SHARES	VALUE(P)
Bank & Fin Svc	1,915,860	64,087,875.00
Comm'l & Ind'l	62,087,180	342,849,340.00
PRO	17,358,000	74,446,600.00
Mining	280,000	115,400.00
OIL	10,000	1,500.00
GRAND TOTALS :	81,651,040	481,500,715.00

AVERAGES		
Bank & Fin Svc	369.67	UP 1.22
Comm'l & Ind'l	1,467.85	UP 11.04
PRO	399.10	DOWN 9.47
Mining	1,186.39	DOWN 5.29
OIL	1.02	DOWN 0.01
All Shares Index	607.71	UP 1.29
Composite	1,011.50	UP 2.86

NO. OF ADVANCES: 18; NO. OF DECLINES: 18; NO. OF UNCHANGED: 24; NO. OF TRADED ISSUES: 60; NO. OF TRADES: 1,472

Low rates, stock slump deal gov't P18.5-B loss

By Doris C. Dumlao

ROCK-BOTTOM interest rates and dirt-cheap stocks cost the government some P18.5 billion in tax revenue shortfall last year, finance officials have said.

In an interview, Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho said low interest rates and a stock market slump accounted for about 36 percent of the Bureau of Internal Revenue's P50-billion revenue shortfall in 2002.

The biggest problem draining the government's pockets, however, remained tax evasion, Camacho said.

Internal Revenue Commissioner Guillermo Parayno disclosed that the BIR incurred a shortfall of at least P17 billion to P18 billion from lower taxes on interest income on savings and deposits, as interest rates remained low.

The government has been keeping interest rates low to lower the cost of doing business in the country and help spur economic growth.

Parayno added that sluggish activities at the Philippine Stock Exchange also resulted in a P500-million shortfall in documentary stamp tax collection.

"Much of that (P50-billion shortfall) has economic reasons. That's why we did not reach the target," he said.

While the impact of lower rates and a stock slump on the government's tax collection was significant, it was still overshadowed by the impact of tax evasion, according to Parayno.

Parayno said based on tax under-declarations recently uncovered by the BIR, the government still had a lot of work to do to improve the revenue collection process.

"The leakages represent the biggest part, and majority of the shortfall comes from large taxpayers," he said.

Based on earlier estimates from the International Monetary Fund, tax evasion had cost the government over P200 billion in 2000.

Last year, tax revenues as a ratio of total economic output dropped to less than 10 percent, an all-time low.

As such, the government is banking on the use of information technology to efficiently monitor tax payments as well as curb nonpayments and under-declaration of taxes.

For its part, the IMF is urging the government to focus on big tax evaders to communicate its serious intention to improve collections.

Camacho said, meanwhile, that the BIR and Bureau of Customs would re-organize their respective institutions starting this month through a performance-based revamp.

US-Iraq tension ...

From page B1

"The market will continue to consolidate next week with no strong incentive to trade. Market bias may depend on the policy measures (of the government) and a Cabinet reshuffling, which President Arroyo is expected to announce early this week," Vistan said.

"However, we are not expecting a strong rally as the worries that hounded the market last year are still present. Geopolitical events in the Middle East and North Korea will be the major concerns. Moreover, there will be caution ahead of the release of fourth-quarter economic and corporate results," he explained.

But Vistan noted that it would be equally unlikely that stocks would decline dramatically as share prices were now at historic low levels.

"A market that is moving sideways puts a premium on stock picking rather than timing," he said.

Eagle Equities president Joseph Roxas said Iraq was the only overhang remaining in the market as the political situation in the country had started to improve.

"The announcement that the President would not run in 2004 would allow her to focus on improving her governance," Roxas said.

He also said the overhang on Meralco had tapered off following a ruling from the Energy Regulatory Commission allowing the Lopez-owned company to collect purchased power cost from consumers, thus offsetting previous advances against the refund ordered by the Supreme Court.

"Also, export numbers are good. While exports to the US are going down, exports to Asian countries including China are going up," he said.

Stock market portal 2tradeasia.com said the centerpiece of portfolio fund managers' debate recently was whether firmer recovery would take place by second half of 2003, or get delayed.

"The US-Iraq tension has already been factored in by the market late last year, and uncertainties as to its magnitude, depth and timing are questions that could only be answered as events progress. Following fund managers' better-than-expected reception to latest economic reports in the US (i.e., manufacturing data), we anticipate the trend to persist, as long as investors get the extra anchor to support any near-term rallies amid all uncertainties," it said.

Having reduced, if not rid of their lemon investments last year, 2tradeasia.com said investors now preferred to stay selective, until large players get some degree of certainty on opportunities.

"The consensus thus far, is that investors could participate in any available trading range, but until significant global-moving incentives come up, rallies are likely to stay short-lived. Traders are selectively moving in on weakness and closing in on strength," it said. *Doris C. Dumlao*

Cocktales

From page B3

of the family's Pilar Development Corp., the profitable and biggest subdivision developer in the Parañaque-Las Piñas-Dasmariñas area.

Nanette was replaced by Ricky Yabut, Bobby's polo-playing colleague.

Bobby also fired Aurora Sicam, longtime president of Pilar Development, and replaced her with Alfredo "Jun" Jimenez Jr., said to be a brother of socialite-philanthropist Rosemarie Arenas.

Bobby, vice chair of Pilar Development, called a special board meeting after aunt Remedios Aguirre-Dupasquier, Pilar Development chair, and her director-son, Jacques, left for Paris for the holidays.

Earlier, Bobby also dismissed Joseph Velhagen as president of BF General and BF Life, the Aguirres' insurance companies, replacing him with Jun Jimenez as well.

Bobby has apparently taken the preemptive moves in the light of the scheduled appearance today of Nanette in a Seattle, Washington-court in answer to a suit filed by Bobby to foreclose on Nanette's US home.

Bobby claims Nanette had taken out an unauthorized $2-million loan from a company that their late father had established to acquire the Seattle property.

Missing Imelda

NEW YORK needs an Imelda Marcos to revive its sluggish retail trade.

"I wish Imelda would shop in," a representative of the Sergio Rossi shoe store on Madison Avenue told a recent New York magazine issue.

"We would get really excited if we saw her coming."

The upscale shoe boutique was recently thrown into a tizzy after a regal Asian lady, initially mistaken for Imelda Marcos, walked into the boutique with an entourage of 40 people.

Alas, it was not the world-class shopper from Manila but actually Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn of Thailand, who is said to almost be a shoe-in for Mrs. Marcos.

Ladies-in-waiting slipped shoes on the Thai royalty for about an hour, reported New York, before the princess decided on merely eight pairs worth $4,000.

Heard through the grapevine

LIBRE, the INQUIRER's Tagalog tabloid that is distributed free Mondays to Fridays among LRT commuters, will soon have competition.

Radio-publishing magnate Antonio Cabangon Chua is launching a similar free sheet in Metro Manila, edited by ex-INQUIRER editor Rosauro Acosta.

The Libre clone should hit the streets later this month, barring unforeseen hitches. *(Cocktales may be reached by e-mail at cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com or at cocktales_pdi@hotmail.com.)*

DOUBLE THIS YEAR

Napocor losses expected to hit P40B in '02

By Ronnel W. Domingo

NATIONAL Power Corp. estimated that it suffered a net loss of P40 billion in 2002, which was four times the 2001 figure of P10 billion.

Napocor documents also showed that the agency's net loss was expected to double to P84.5 billion this year due to expenses for the separation of employees, a regulator-ordered rate reduction and lower sales.

The power firm said the Energy Regulatory Commission's ruling in September ordering Napocor to reduce its rates by an average of about 13 centavos per kilowatt-hour was a result of the power agency's petition for rate unbundling.

The Electric Power Industry Reform Act required Napocor and other electricity firms to break down into separate components the charges that appear on their customers' bills.

On June 26, the ERC decided that the unbundling of Napocor's rates should result in a reduction of its rates by 7 centavos per kWh, instead of a 17-centavo increase as requested by the power agency.

Napocor asked the ERC to reconsider its order but the commission affirmed its decision on Sept. 6. The ERC even ordered an additional rate cut of 6 centavos.

Napocor said the lower rates would translate to P26.5 billion in foregone revenues. The projected decline in sales by 7,096 gigawatthours is also expected to result in additional losses worth P7.6 billion. Total electricity sales for 2002 was estimated at P34 billion.

Napocor said the projected decline in sales was based on the decreasing purchases by its biggest customer, the Manila Electric Co.

Meralco used to buy from Napocor 3,600 megawatts of power per month, but the operation of affiliate power plants have whittled this down to an average of about 3,000 MW monthly.

Napocor said it would spend about P13 billion for the settlement of separation pays of employees that the agency would have to let go in line with its reorganization. Napocor unions said 1,800 employees would lose their jobs due to the reorganization.

As of September 2002, the firm's profitability had hit a record low of negative 4.6 percent. Napocor registered a return on rate base of 2.9 percent as of end of 2001.

Napocor's debt-to-equity ratio further deteriorated to 94:06 in the first nine months of 2002. This was pegged at 91:09 in 2001.

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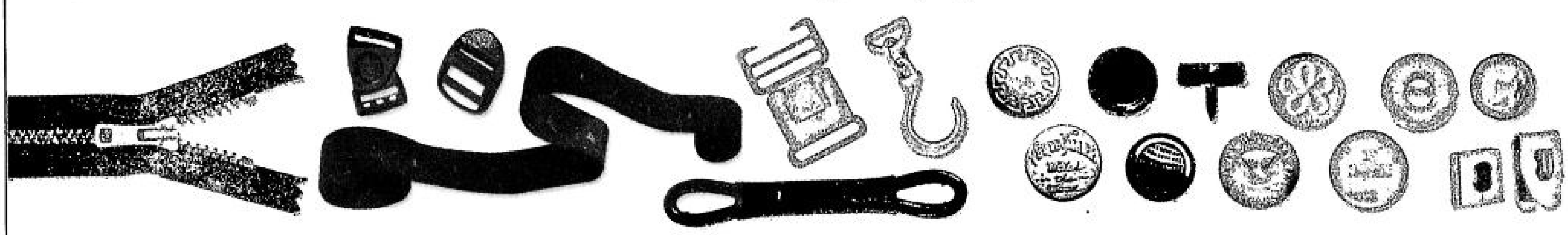

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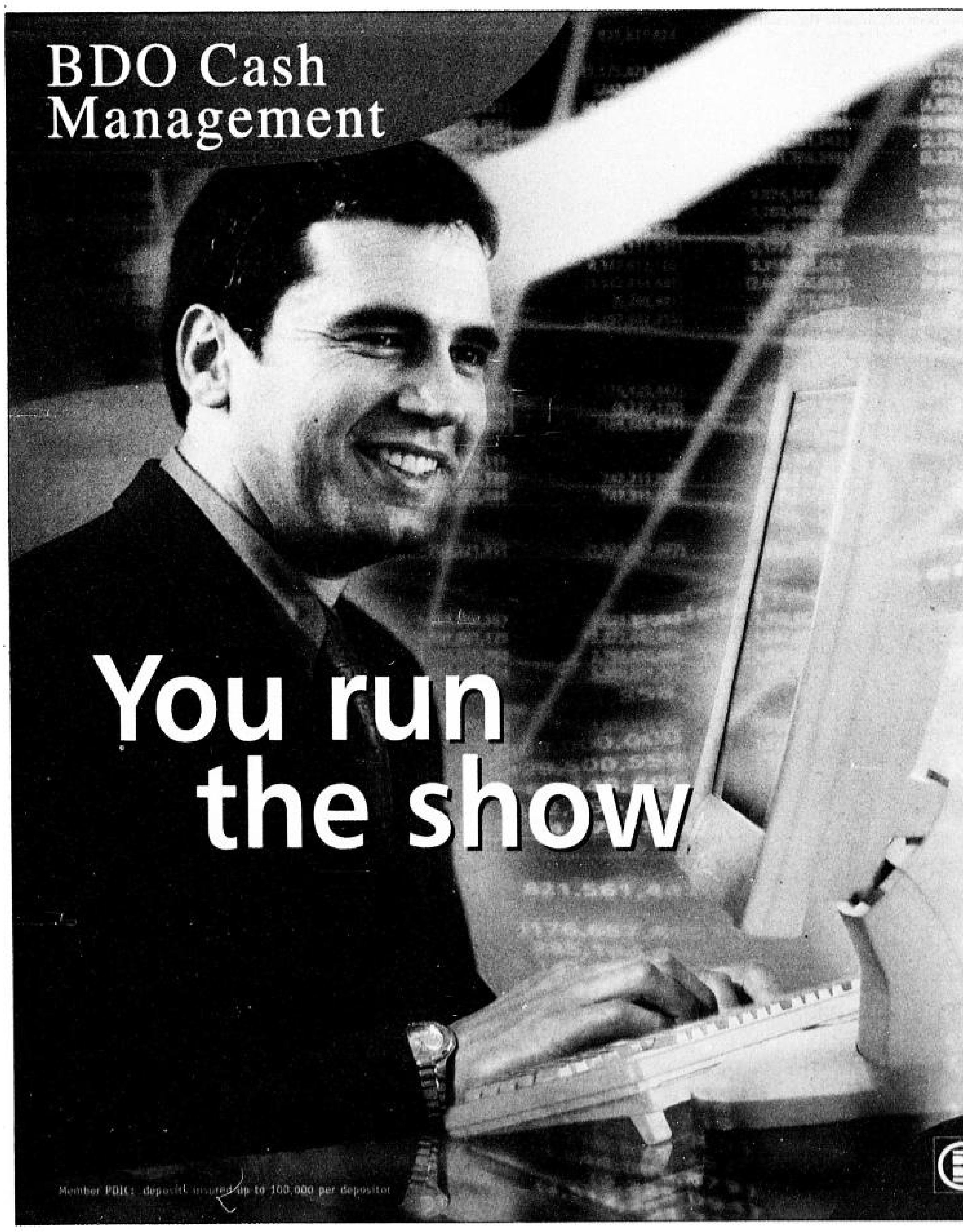

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The year ahead

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honesto C. General

THE NEW year will be a turning point in the insurance industry.

When the industry was liberalized (I don't want to say globalize because this word seems to send some patriots into a frenzy) some years back, foreign companies were allowed to enter through any of three doors.

Either they buy into a Filipino company, put up a wholly owned subsidiary, or establish a full-fledged branch office.

Some of the world's largest life insurance companies came rushing in.

Four bought into Filipino companies, 16 set up wholly owned subsidiaries. Twenty in all. Suddenly, the number of life insurance companies doubled.

What drew these giant life insurance companies to the Philippines?

They probably thought that, since less than 10 percent of the population carried some form of individual life policy, the country was still virgin territory with a lot of room for new players. Maybe so.

But most of the new companies have barely gotten off the ground. Why?

First, the market is not as virgin as many thought; not too many Filipinos earn the extra cash to set aside in a life insurance policy.

Second, you can't tap the market unless you are able to build an efficient agency force; the new players seem to have been unable to do this. Thirdly, they did not reckon with the counter moves of the longtime industry leaders: PhilAm, Insular, Sun, and Manufacturers, which simply just geared up to face the new competition.

A few of the new players have pulled out. I expect a few more will before the new year is over. Those staying have come up with new products sold in a different way, for instance, through the banks (I will take up bancassurance in a coming column) or have built the beginnings of a strong sales force. In the long run, this will be good for the insuring public.

Which only goes to show that liberalization is nothing to be scared of.

The Philippines is a tough market to get into. Besides, the Filipino is a scrappy fellow, especially in his home grounds.

On the non-life side, only four foreigners bought into Filipino companies, and another four set up wholly owned subsidiaries. But the landscape will also change. Because of 9/11 and the drop in the stock market, foreign companies are merging to stay alive. This will affect the local subsidiaries.

Expect a few more small domestic companies to follow those that have closed shop recently. The weak economy had little to do with these closures. A number of small companies have been running on empty gas tanks for years. Closing down was inevitable. It is a wonder they lasted so long. However, their closures will have little effect on the buying public.

But the big story in non-life is the impending increase in premiums as a result of 9/11 and the huge losses in equity investments or insurance companies worldwide.

Fire insurance premiums will go up but probably slightly, especially for residential buildings and small enterprises. But natural perils (earthquake, typhoon and flood) will rise several times. This will hit the big industrial buyers and high-rise condominiums.

This rise in premium for fire and natural perils is also cyclical. For some five years now, competition has brought down premiums. Now, they are on the way up again. But, after a few good years, premiums will go down again. Then, we will be off to the races again.

Health and hospital care insurance (including Health Maintenance Organizations) will be more expensive to buy as medicine and drugs and professional and hospital fees continue to go up.

Insurance against terrorism and sabotage is no longer available. It will probably never be again.

RP plans global bond issue

From page B1

expected to affect the pricing of the government's global bond offering in the immediate future

Despite plans to venture into the global bond market, however, the government is still keen on obtaining the bulk of its funding requirements from the domestic market. Interest rates based on the benchmark 91-day Treasury bill rate are seen rising to a range of 8-9 percent from the earlier assumption of 7-8 percent.

As of the previous T-bills auction, the 91-day T-bill rate remained at below 6 percent.

The government has changed its financing mix to a ratio of 52:48 in favor of domestic borrowings, a reversal of the earlier 56:44 ratio in favor of foreign borrowings. *Doris C. Dumlao*

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RP gross international reserves at $16B in 2002

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas ended 2002 with $16 billion in gross international reserves, better than its target of $14 billion to $15 billion.

BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said the GIR surged shortly before the year's end on account of the $500 million in fresh borrowings secured by state-owned National Power Corp. last month.

Napocor embarked on a bond offering that was guaranteed by multilateral lender Asian Development Bank.

The dollar reserves likewise grew because of the foreign borrowings of the national government to fund its huge deficit, as well as the additional debt papers floated by the central bank itself for reserve management.

The BSP, for its part, also plans to tap the foreign currency deposit unit market soon to refinance some maturing debts in March.

This means it will borrow dollars from Philippine banks, which are still cautious about lending to non-sovereign borrowers.

Buenaventura said, however, that the central would limit its borrowings to the FCDU market, which remained largely untapped by local borrowers due to foreign exchange risks.

"We will tap FCDUs sometime in March with a minimum (borrowing) of $500 million," he disclosed.

The GIR consists of foreign currency holdings used to cover a country's dollar requirements, such as for debt servicing and importation.

It is also seen as an important indicator of the central bank's capacity to curb foreign currency speculators, as monetary officials unload dollars at the spot market whenever intervention is necessary.

New Napocor, Transco heads assume posts today; restructuring tops agenda

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE NEW presidents of the National Power Corp. and National Transmission Corp. are assuming office today.

Rogelio Murga, Napocor's 17th president, is taking over the post left behind by Jesus Alcordo, who resigned in February last year.

Alcordo has been appointed adviser for energy affairs with the rank of undersecretary.

Career official Roland Quilala served as Napocor officer-in-charge and acting president before Murga's appointment was announced last month.

The 68-year-old Murga obtained a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from the University of the Philippines and was involved in the engineering and construction business for about 30 years.

Murga served as president and chief operating officer of EEI Corp. and was its vice chair when he retired in 2001.

Transco named Alan Ortiz as its president, the second since it was spun off from Napocor.

Ortiz was president of the Development Bank of the Philippines between June 1994 and July 1995 and was country manager of the American firm Edison Mission Energy's local unit from December 1997 to November 1999.

Edison Mission is Industrias Metalurgicas Pescarmona Sociedad Anonima's partner in the controversial Caliraya-Botocan-Kalayaan hydro power project.

Ortiz obtained an AB economics degree from the Ateneo de Manila University.

Napocor is currently undergoing a major restructuring, while Transco is awaiting a Senate decision on whether it will be granted a transmission system franchise that it can automatically transfer to a concessionaire.

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CATHAY Pacific has launched its sixth daily flight service between Manila and Hong Kong. Cathay airport services supervisor Louie Fajarda (center) is seen here overseeing ground attendants collecting boarding passes of passengers at the gate prior to departure. ROGER MARGALLO

'02 deficit seen lower …

From page B1

ceed it," Parayno said.

The BIR recorded a substantial increase in revenue collection in November when total collection amounted to P40.9 billion. This was attributed to the successful implementation of a new administrative measure called the voluntary assessment and abatement program (VAAP).

Parayno said the BIR was able to meet the P6-billion expected collection from companies that were found deficient in their tax payments under the VAAP. The bureau earlier issued stern warnings against these companies.

The Bureau of Customs likewise improved its performance, exceeding its collection goal by 15 percent in December.

Customs Commissioner Antonio Bernardo said the P10.8 billion collected in December was so far the highest monthly collection recorded by the BoC. He attributed this to higher import volumes despite the depreciation of the peso.

Even when the peso started falling, importers continued their purchases and to build their inventory for fear of further fall in the value of the local currency which will make their goods more expensive.

Also, because imports are taxed based on the value, the BoC collected higher in peso terms when the local currency weakened.

The BoC also collected some P3.5 billion from state-controlled National Food Authority in the form of duties on its rice imports.

Electric co-ops start filing petitions to reduce rates

PETITIONS for cuts in the rates charged by electric cooperatives ranging from 0.7 centavo to P1.16 per kilowatt-hour has started coming in, with five likely getting a provisional authority soon, the Energy Regulatory Commission has said.

ERC commissioner Mary Anne Colayco said in an interview that the commission preferred to provisionally grant rate reductions as quickly as possible so that the public would enjoy the benefits of power industry reforms.

The most immediate perk of the Electric Power Industry Reform Act was a 30-centavo-per-kWh mandatory rate reduction that electric cooperatives, large utilities and the National Power Corp. implemented as soon as the law was enacted in June 2001.

Colayco would not say how immediately the ERC would grant provisional authorities to the cooperatives that had submitted their applications, saying the commission would take enough time to study them thoroughly.

ERC records show that the five utilities include the three Pampanga Electric Cooperatives (Pelco I, II and III), Pampanga Rural Electric Service and Batangas II Electric Cooperative.

Colayco explained the rate reduction was a result of the condonation of the cooperatives' debts worth about P17 billion.

The ERC is also entertaining applications for unbundled rates—breaking up the rates as they appear on customers bills into different component—from electric utilities.

So far, decisions on four such applications from cooperatives have been issued. These resulted to reduced rates but the cooperatives involved filed motions for reconsideration.

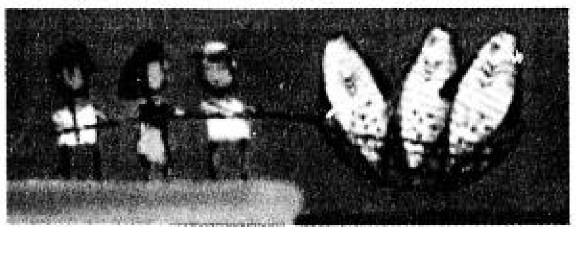
Singapore seen …

From page B2

lines for mid-stream products and five for downstream products.

Negotiations for trade compensation are likely to be tough based on the experience of Malaysia which had invoked the Asean protocol to delay the opening of its automotive market up to 2005. Discussions with Thailand have reportedly bogged down.

Aside from bickering from the country's partners, the government also has to face a dissatisfied Association of Petrochemical Manufacturers of the Philippines (APMP) which has appealed to the President to reject the TRM's decision and adopt its proposal to maintain duties of resins at 15 percent for at least two more years. *Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*



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PUBLIC NOTICES

ANNOUNCEMENT

CAREGIVER TRNG 5276418

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late LILIA C. BILLONES has been extrajudicially settled by her heirs as per doc. no. 225; page no. 46; book no. 6; series of 2002 before notary public Atty. Felixberto Abad of Quezon City.
(PDI-Dec 23, 30, & Jan 6 2002)

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REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
REGIONAL TRIAL COURT
FOURTH JUDICIAL REGION
BRANCH 21
IMUS, CAVITE

IN RE: PETITION FOR REHABILITATION
SEC CASE NO. 025-02

SOUTHERN LUZON COLLEGE
OF BUSINESS, MARITIME, SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGY, INC.,
Petitioner.
x---x

STAY ORDER

This is a petition for rehabilitation filed by the petitioner, Southern Luzon College of Business, Maritime, Science and Technology, Inc., a corporation duly organized and existing under the laws of the Republic of the Philippines with principal place of business at Congressional East Avenue, Dasmariñas, Cavite, praying that the court forthwith issue a stay order pursuant to Section 6, Rule 4 of the *Interim Rules*, and after due notice, publication and hearing, judgment be rendered approving the Rehabilitation Plan and suspending payments by petitioner to its creditors until such time as indicated in the Rehabilitation Plan when it can resume repayment of its indebtedness to all its creditors.

Petitioner alleges, among others, that it is an educational institution engaged in offering of Pre-Elementary, Elementary, Secondary, Vocational-Technical and College Courses in accordance with up-to-date and modern educational theories and methods prescribed and authorized by the Department of Education, the Technical Education Skills Development Authority and the Commission on Higher Education; that since the early years of its operation, petitioner realized profitability and did not experience difficulty in paying its creditors, suppliers and employees; that for a continuous span of six (6) years of operation, petitioner performed well and went with the rise and fall of the economy never defaulting in its payment to its creditors, suppliers, and employees; that it encountered difficulty only during the last quarter of 1999 when it opened its maritime courses and purchased the necessary equipment required and needed for the course; that to cope up with its financial needs to support its purchases of equipment to comply with the CHED's requirements, petitioner was compelled to go on private borrowings with a little higher interest rates; that at first, with the steady profitability of petitioner's operation, it was able to regularly service and pay its obligation to its creditors, suppliers and employees; that however, the confluence of the gradual decrease of enrollment, steep depreciation of the Philippine peso that followed, the high interest rates from private borrowings and the severe economic crunch prevailing in the country particularly during the last four (4) years, adversely affected the operation of the petitioner; that this resulted in its inability to realize enrollment projections that would have enabled it to meet and/or pay its obligations; that with poor or decreasing enrollment, high interest rates on its borrowings, increasingly higher labor and other administrative expenses, petitioner is currently in default in servicing or paying its maturing obligations as they fall due; that presently, there are pending cases against the petitioner and its corporate officers; that there are also threats of suits and number of demands to enforce claims against the petitioner; that petitioner stands to have a big chance to operate with profitability if it can be granted temporary relief from remitting payments to pay off matured and maturing obligation, by way of rehabilitation and allow it to defer debt servicing until it is able to realize profitability again for the benefit of its creditors, employees and stockholders; and that petitioner pleads for relief from all its financial obligations through a judicial order allowing petitioner to suspend payment of its debts in accordance with the rehabilitation plan until its full resumption of debt repayments.

Finding the petition to be sufficient in form and substance, a STAY ORDER is hereby issued pursuant to Section 6, Rule 4 of the Interim Rules of Procedure on Corporate Rehabilitation as follows:

(a) Staying enforcement of all claims, whether for money or otherwise and whether such enforcement is by court action or otherwise, against the petitioner, its guarantors and sureties not solidarily liable with the debtor;

(b) Prohibiting the petitioner from selling, encumbering, transferring or disposing in any manner any of its properties except in the ordinary course of its business;

(c) Prohibiting the petitioner from making any payment of its liabilities outstanding as at the date of the filing of this petition;

(d) Prohibiting the petitioner's supplier of goods or services from withholding supply of goods and services in the ordinary course of business for as long as the petitioner makes payments of the services and goods supplied after the issuance of this stay order;

(e) Directing the payment in full of all administrative expenses incurred after the issuance of this stay order.

Meanwhile, Atty. Bienvenido S. Magnaye, Chairman, TACK International Philippines, Inc. and Audio Dyn Farm Productions, Inc., President, Jupiter Bendel Technologies, Inc., Principal, BSM Management and Legal Services, and Inocentes De Leon Leogardo Atienza Magnaye and Azucena Law Office, Vice-President, Philippine Dispute Resolution Center, Inc. and Accredited Arbitrator, Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry and National Conciliation and Mediation Board is hereby appointed as Rehabilitation Receiver and is hereby directed to assume his position as such upon the taking of an oath before the Branch Clerk of this Court and after posting of a bond in the amount of P1,000,000.00 executed in favor of petitioner Southern Luzon College of Business, Maritime, Science and Technology, Inc. to guarantee the faithful discharge of his duties as Rehabilitation Receiver and the Orders of this Court.

The petitioner is hereby directed to publish this Stay Order in a newspaper of general circulation in the Philippines, once a week for two (2) consecutive weeks.

All creditors and all interested parties, including the Securities and Exchange Commission, are hereby directed to file and serve on the petitioner, Southern Luzon College of Business, Maritime, Science and Technology, Inc., their verified comment on or opposition to this petition, with supporting affidavits and documents, not later than ten (10) days before the date of the initial hearing. Failure of the creditors and all interested parties, including the Securities and Exchange Commission, to file their verified comment on or opposition will bar them from participating in this proceedings.

Within such time as to enable them to file their verified comment on or opposition to the petition and to prepare them for the initial hearing of his case, all creditors and all interested parties, including the Securities and Exchange Commission, are hereby directed to secure from this Court copies of the petition and its annexes.

Finally, the initial hearing of this case is hereby set on January 17, 2003 at 8:30 o'clock in the morning.

SO ORDERED.

Imus, Cavite, November 27, 2002.

(Sgd.) NORBERTO J. QUISUMBING, JR.
Judge

(PDI - Jan. 6 & 13, 2003)

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IN LOVING MEMORY ON
THE FIRST DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF

MARTA PLATON MAIQUEZ

who passed away on January 6, 2002.

Her bereaved husband **Faustino M. Maiquez**; children **Dory, Adelaida, Terie, Tom, Bebot, Fred, Geronimo (†), Pablito (†), Lorenzo (†)**; grandchildren **Yvette, Raida, Voltaire, Wilcy, Janice, Karen, Paul, Japi, Trixie, Mitchie, Kim, Chin, Diego** and relatives **Imon, Linda, Conrad, Tessie, Onie**, and **Liezl** request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

"...absent with the body to be present with the Lord."
2 Corinthians 5:8

In Loving Memory
on the 7th Death Anniversary
January 6, 2003

PURIFICACION Z. YUJUICO

Masses will be offered
at the following churches:

Our Lady of Mount Carmel *New Manila*	7:00 AM 6:00 PM
Santuario de San Antonio *Forbes*	7:00 AM 12:15 PM 6:00 PM
Santa Rosa De Lima Parish Church *Sta. Rosa, Laguna*	7:30 AM 4:30 PM
Our Lady of Beautiful Love *Merville*	6:00 AM 6:00 PM

PLEASE PRAY FOR HER ETERNAL REPOSE.

In Loving Memory
on the 1st Death Anniversary of

SOCORRO "Coring" HONORAS vda. de VIAR

September 25, 1930 – January 6, 2002

In loving memory of her children **Ms. Ma. Luisa H. Viar & Renato Sang-Alan, Carmencita** and **Rosendo Espiritu**; grandchildren **Glenn Jason, Kris, Joseph Troy, Dino Richie** and **Jim Clark**.

We would like to invite our relatives and friends to join us as we celebrate with joy the memory of her life on earth as well as her eternal reward in heaven.

Masses will be offered on January 6, 2003 at the following churches:

Our Lady of the Abandoned Parish *San Roque, Marikina City*	5:00 AM
Sta. Clara Church *Katipunan Avenue, Quezon City*	6:00 AM

For the needs of your departed Loved Ones, the following establishments can help you.

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296 Quezon Ave., Quezon City;
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1511 Gen. Luna St., Paco, Manila;
Tels. 522-8846; 522-9438; 400-5394

CLASSIFIEDS

DEPARTMENT OF TRADE & INDUSTRY
PHILIPPINES

NOTICE OF INITIATION OF INVESTIGATION ON THE APPLICATION FOR THE IMPOSITION OF ANTI-DUMPING DUTY AGAINST IMPORTATION OF CORRUGATING MEDIUM (WASTE-BASED) (4805.0000) FROM THAILAND (ANTI-DUMPING CASE NO. 01-2002)

ON 16 DECEMBER 2002, DTI OFFICIALLY RECEIVED A PROPERLY DOCUMENTED APPLICATION FROM THE PHILIPPINE INDUSTRIAL PAPER PACKAGING INDUSTRY FOR THE INITIATION OF AN ANTI-DUMPING INVESTIGATION AGAINST THE IMPORTATION OF CORRUGATING MEDIUM (WASTE-BASED) (4805.1000) FROM THAILAND. THE PROTEST ALLEGED THAT CORRUGATING MEDIUM IS BEING IMPORTED FROM THAILAND AT DUMPED PRICES AND THAT AS A RESULT THEREOF CAUSES MATERIAL INJURY TO THE DOMESTIC INDUSTRY PRODUCING LIKE ARTICLE IN TERMS OF DECLINE SALES, PRODUCTION AND CAPACITY UTILIZATION.

THE DTI, ACTING UNDER PARAGRAPH A OF SECTION 301 OF THE TARIFF AND CUSTOMS CODE AS AMENDED BY RA 8752 HAS MADE AN EVALUATION OF THE PROTEST AND FOUND REASONABLE GROUNDS TO INITIATE AN ANTI-DUMPING INVESTIGATION ON CORRUGATING MEDIUM FROM THAILAND. THE PERIOD OF INVESTIGATION FOR DUMPING IS FOR 2001 WHILE THE PERIOD OF INVESTIGATION FOR INJURY IS FROM 1999 TO 2001.

THE COMMENCEMENT DATE FOR THE INVESTIGATION IS THE DAY ON WHICH THIS NOTICE OF INITIATION IS PUBLISHED IN TWO (2) NEWSPAPERS OF GENERAL CIRCULATION.

WHEREFORE, IN VIEW THEREOF, ANY INTERESTED PARTIES WHO MAY WISH TO SUBMIT THEIR COMMENTS AND POSITION ON THE APPLICATION FOR THE IMPOSITION OF ANTI-DUMPING DUTY AGAINST THE IMPORTATION OF CORRUGATING MEDIUM FROM THAILAND ARE REQUESTED TO DIRECT THEIR REPRESENTATION TO THE BUREAU OF IMPORT SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY, 3RD FLOOR, OPPEN BUILDING, #349 SEN. GIL PUYAT AVENUE, MAKATI CITY, WITHIN THIRTY (30) DAYS FROM DATE OF PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE.

23 DECEMBER 2002.

MAR ROXAS
Secretary

(PDI - Jan. 6, 2003)

JOB MARKET
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RE-INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC Exploration Corporation (PNOC EC) invites interested contractors to apply for eligibility and to submit sealed bids for the **Stevedoring, Arrastre, Terminalling and Hauling Services at Naga Coal Terminal (CCT WOR 07 02 R1).**

The approved budget for this contract is Php3,401,200.00.

Only contractors who will comply with PNOC EC's eligibility requirements shall be allowed to participate in the public bidding.

Eligbility and Tender Documents shall be available for issuance at the above address from the Operations Services Group from January 9, to 17, 2003, upon presentation of a Letter of Intent and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of PESOS: Five Hundred (PHP 500.00).

For the purpose of clarifications, bidders are invited and required to attend the pre-bidding conference, which will be conducted on **January 20, 2003** at 10:00 a.m. at the Bldg. I, Conference Room of the above address.

The public bidding shall incorporate the electronic bid submission, using the ITBF system. Deadline for submission of Eligbility Requirements, Bid and Tender Documents will be set during the Pre-Bidding Conference.

PNOC EC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, or to accept such bids or to award any part thereof to any bidder/s whose bid/s is/are considered most advantageous to PNOC EC.

This publication is also posted at DBM Website: www.procurementservices.net

(Sgd.) RICARDO S. BASALLO, JR.
Chairman, Contracts Award Committee

(PDI – Jan. 6, 2003)

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

CELESTINE GISELLE ROQUE

The public is hereby notified that **CELESTINE GISELLE ROQUE**, whose picture appears below and whose last known address is **#5 Gumamela St., Tahanan Village, Parañaque City** is being sought by **YL FINANCE CORPORATION** in connection to unsatisfied obligation, with the company. **Unit: Renault Mini Van; Model 1996; Chassis # VF1F2WEO514075394; Motor # F005276; Plate # USZ-896; Color Red.**

Anyone who has information that would lead to the immediate recovery of the herein above described motor vehicle which is presently morgaged with YL Finance Corp., will be REWARDED.

PLEASE CONTACT: YL FINANCE - Legal Department
#339 Gil Puyat Ave., Ext. Makati City Tel. Nos.: 896 4743 to 44

Republic of the Philippines
Province of Iloilo
Municipality of Cabatuan

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND BID

The Municipality of Cabatuan, through its Bid and Award Committee (BAC) invites contractors registered with and classified by the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) to apply for eligibility and if found eligible, to bid for the project.

Name of Project/Location/Description	ABC	PCAB/IAC/Equipment
New Iloilo Airport Development Project-Relocation Site Development Bgy. Banguit, Cabatuan, Iloilo (Construction of Relocation Site under the New Iloilo Airport Development Project)	P16,621,054.00	Medium "B" for Roads & Buildings 1-Bulldozer, 1-Payloader, 1-Road Grader, 1-Road Roller, 1-Water Truck, 1-Backhoe, 2-Concrete Mixer, 2-Concrete Vibrator, 1-Plate Compactor, 3-Dumptrucks, 1-Welding Machine, 1-Bar Cutter

All particulars relative to Eligibility Screening, Bid Bond, Performance Bond, Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification of the lowest calculated bid and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of E.O. 40 and its implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR).

The Request for Eligibility Screening (RES Form 1) will be available to interested bidders for issuance until 5:00 p.m. on **January 14, 2003** at NIADP Office (NIADPO), Cabatuan, Iloilo, upon payment to the Municipal Treasurer of a non-refundable amount of P500.00 and P200.00 as service fee. Interested Bidders shall submit their duly accomplished RES Form 1 and attachments to the NIADPO not later than 5:00 p.m. on **January 21, 2003**, and secure from the NIADPO the results of the eligibility screening on **January 27, 2003**. Interested bidders are requested to bring their updated PCAB/IAC license and letter of intent to the NIADPO.

Bid/Tender Documents will be available to eligible bidders for issuance from **January 27** to 5:00 p.m. on **January 28, 2003** at NIADPO, Cabatuan, Iloilo upon payment to the Municipal Treasurer of a non-refundable amount of P1,500.00 and P200.00 as service fee.

All eligible bidders issued with Bid Documents are required to attend a Pre-Bid Conference & Site Inspection scheduled on **February 3, 2003** starting at 9:00 a.m. at the Municipal Session Hall, Cabatuan, Iloilo.

Submission of Bid Proposal is until 12:00 noon, **February 21, 2003** at the Municipal Session Hall, Cabatuan, Iloilo. Opening of Bids will start at 2:00 p.m., **February 21, 2003.**

The Municipality of Cabatuan reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any minor defect and accept the offer most advantageous to the Government.

The Municipality of Cabatuan assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

(Sgd.) WILFREDO L. JILOCA
Bid & Award Committee Chairman

(PDI--Dec. 29 & Jan. 6, 2003)

E-mail: pr_info_tech@inquirer.com.ph
INFOTECH
Editor **Leo Magno**

Questions raised over P250-M DBM IT project

By Erwin Lemuel G. Oliva

IS this a case of losing bidders of a government project crying foul over a bid that has been awarded to another bidder?

Charlie Villaseñor, president and chief executive of Filipino firm TransProcure Corp., has come out to expose what he calls "questionable" aspects of the bidding of a P250-million project of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM). Joining him is Carol Carreon, president of Bayantrade, a local e-marketplace established two years ago.

Villaseñor, who is also an eProcurement consultant for the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development International Trade Center, said that he had already shared his opinions about the five-year project to Budget Secretary Emilia Boncondin in a forum November last year.

But he claimed that Boncodin had not made any actions to assuage brewing rumors of the supposed rigging of the project.

For her part, Carreon said: "I'm disappointed to learn that the G-EPS contract is to be awarded to a consortium that will use US-based e-marketplace infrastructure and proprietary solutions and has no track record in the Philippines."

"I'm especially disappointed because the Philippines has a global, multi-awarded best-in-class e-marketplace that wasn't even evaluated," added Carreon in an e-mail sent to INQ7.net.

Reports indicate that the DBM has already identified the winner of the bid and will be awarding the government e-procurement system (G-EPS) project to a consortium called ITBF Philippines within the month.

Members of the consortium include East West Electronic Trade Center Ltd., a foreign-owned company based in the Philippines; Right Computers; ABC Consulting and Infomediary.

The consortium won the project over the remaining contender, Ayala Systems Technology Inc. This happened after two bidders, including a consortium where Transprocure Corp. was a member, were disqualified on technicalities.

Four out of 10 bidders were short-listed earlier after passing evaluation of the Procurement Policy Board of the DBM, which began August 2002.

Transprocure was part of the Questronix/Magnus/Ariba/Ayalaport consortium that was disqualified for late submission of technical documents required by the agency.

"How could they make a decision if they have not really invited all solution providers to make presentations? The selection of winning bidders was based on technical documentations," explained Villaseñor.

In a letter sent to Boncodin on Nov. 4, 2002, Villaseñor pointed out that the consortium—which Transprocure was a part of—was "disqualified on some minor technical ground because of a 6-minute delay at the time of submission."

SPECIAL REPORT

"The disqualification proceedings have brought down the qualified bidders to only two, which obviously is a limited opportunity to fully consider what is available on the eProcurement market," Villaseñor wrote.

The executive also pointed out that the "selection process should identify best-of-breed solutions that can address the unique requirements of the Philippine government."

Villaseñor, in his letter, insisted that the bidding process "should have adequate representation of the best-of-breed solutions currently available in the market," and appealed the agency to review and reconsider the technical disqualification of the bid submitted by the consortium.

Days passed and the consortium allegedly did not receive any reply from Budget Secretary Boncodin, Villaseñor said.

"If you're going to look at the whole process, any layman would understand that it was not fair and transparent. They based decisions on technical documents, and they have not allowed the providers to make presentations," Villaseñor added.

Carreon echoed Villaseñor's remarks. She pointed out that Bayantrade, which joined a consortium led by Philippine firm Technology Information Management, was disqualified because it failed to submit a "simple form that was supposed to name its representative, but instead submitted a secretary's certificate, duly notarized, naming representatives."

Carreon also noted that the bidder to whom the DBM is set to award the project, failed to disclose some "substantive information in the submission of its joint venture structure, specifically the core of its offering involves US-based infrastructure and a proprietary technology that goes against current technology trends and best practice."

"I believe in this project, its goals, and its leadership. I just hope that the rules will be employed in a way that will help the Philippine government make the best investment decision. After all, public funds are scarce and government e-procurement system is a project aimed at helping the economy by improving procurement processes. It's difficult to see how that's going to happen when such fundamental problems are being encountered in the awarding of the project that is supposed to do that," she stressed.

Carreon claimed that the winning consortium, ITBF Philippines, uses "neither of the two most widely used e-marketplace solutions."

The executive was referring to solutions provided by global companies Ariba and CommerceOne.

A local group called the Philippine Institute of Supply Management is contemplating on coming out with a similar appeal to the DBM to review the bidding process of the G-EPS, according to Villaseñor.

"I believe they are asking for a meeting with Secretary Boncodin," Villaseñor said.

This is not the first instance when questions had been raised over the bidding of the P250-million project of the DBM.

And once again, the agency officials were quick to defend it, saying the accusations were "baseless" and "unsubstantiated."

"What are they complaining about? Is it the fact that only two reached the post-qualification? Or is it due to the fact that they should be exempt from the rules (of bidding)?" said Joel Syquia, procurement service deputy program manager for government electronic procurement service of the DBM, in a separate interview.

Syquia stressed that the bidding rules should be followed.

"Late submissions are not accepted according to the rules," he added, noting the six-minute late submission of the Questronix-led consortium, of which Transprocure was a member.

On the issue of transparency, Syquia lambasted Villaseñor for saying that the agency had not been transparent during the bidding process.

"We had been meeting with the bidders. We had a pre-bidding conference, a special meeting with the bidders to explain the rules of the biddings. All the proceedings were videotaped," Syquia noted.

QUESTIONS/B11

BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER

Welcome to my slayground

By Joey G. Alarilla

UNLIKELY as it may seem with a title like that, Buffy the Vampire Slayer remains one of the most intelligent TV shows around, with great characters and a rich mythology. I'm a longtime follower of the series, so I'm not ashamed to admit that the Buffy video game is one of the reasons I chose to buy an Xbox—which my wife Ellen and I have christened Ickis—aside from the upcoming Doom 3 and Fable (formerly Project Ego) titles on Microsoft's next-generation console.

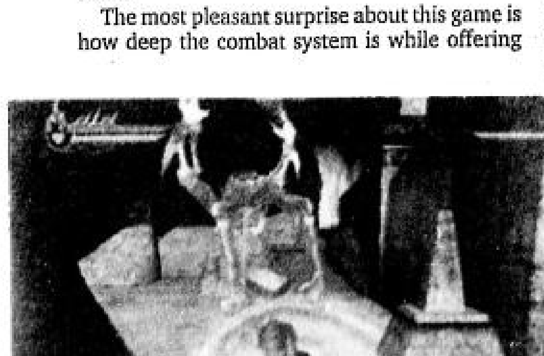
The good news is that Buffy delivers, avoiding the fate of most TV shows and movies that are turned into video games only to end up sucking big time. The game captures the show's offbeat humor and pumped-up action scenes while still offering a solid title that even non-Buffy fans will appreciate. The guys over at The Collective really did a great job with this title, and it really showcases how well they motion-captured the moves of Sarah Michelle Gellar's stunt double.

Buffy features great graphics and smooth animation—not as jaw-dropping as Halo or Dead or Alive 3 but still definitely impressive. It's cool to see how well Buffy's face conveys her emotions—and, yes, her lips move when she talks. The game faithfully recreates Buffy's haunts, including The Bronze, Sunnydale High and, of course, the cemetery. Good sound effects and music, and the game creates the right tension-filled atmosphere without becoming survival-horror.

The artists also did a great job capturing the likeness of Buffy, Giles, Xander, Angel, Spike, Cordelia and the other members of the supporting cast. In fact, only Willow sometimes looks like she woke up on the wrong side of the bed—poor Alyson Hannigan. Also, a big plus is that the actual cast does the voiceovers for the characters, the most glaring exception being Buffy herself. Sarah's voice double, however, didn't do a bad job—for the most part, it's amazing how dead-on her rendition is, but other times it's just dead.

The most pleasant surprise about this game is how deep the combat system is while offering user-friendly controls that will have you kicking vampire butt in no time. Buffy can punch, kick and throw baddies around while using a variety of weapons, including a wooden stake, shovel, rake and crossbow. Later in the game, Xander will give you the XVS water gun, basically a modified Super Soaker that you can fill with holy water and hellfire—which are both definitely not on the list of favorite things of demons and the undead.

I like to describe the Buffy video game as Tekken meets Tomb Raider. Buffy makes like Lara Croft in this game, exploring tunnels, cemeteries, mausoleums and the god-awful Sunken Church. The Sunken Church is actually one of the most beautifully rendered underground environments but you won't really be going there to enjoy the gothic scenery. The bad news is that you'll have to pass through this area in two separate missions.



Unlike other adventure games, Buffy doesn't offer complex puzzles. The developers even poke fun at old games like Doom or Resident Evil in one level where Buffy has to collect different security keys to unlock the areas in Angel's mansion. Hunting for the red, blue and green keys, Buffy wonders aloud why "archaic key systems" had to have so many different colors.

The meat of the matter in this game is the fighting. Sure, you can try button mashing Tekken-style, but the combos are really useful in bailing you out when you're outnumbered. A cool feature is that you can boost your punches and kicks by holding down on the last button of your combo, unleashing a Matrix-style effect. Of course, the cool Matrix-style effects aren't as amusing when you're the one being battered by vampires with high-speed attacks.

The main foes of Buffy are, of course, vamps—she's the Vampire Slayer, after all. Buffy, however, is an equal opportunity slayer, and the enemies in this game include vampires, skeletons, zombies, hellhounds, giant spiders and different types of demons. As you venture deep into the game, you'll unravel the plot hatched by the main villain, the centuries-old vampire known as The Master, who's the ancestor of Angel, Spike and other vamps.

Fans of the TV series will remember that The Master was the main villain during Buffy's first season, who was destroyed during the finale but later came back to haunt Buffy. This video game is set sometime during the third season of the series—way back when Buffy didn't have a thing for Spike, Angel didn't have his own series, Xander and Cordelia were an item and Willow wasn't a lesbian.

In the video game plot, The Master is trapped in a ghost-like state. His scheme will involve three major demons who have the power to alter reality and later in the game you'll be spending some time in their realm. File that under vacation spots you definitely don't want to visit. These islands

BUFFY/B11

Future of computing at stake in Microsoft-Sun Java case

By Gerry Plaza

CALL it a huge victory for Sun Microsystems. However, Microsoft won't take it sitting down.

A few days before Christmas, a US district court judge compelled Microsoft to include Java technology in Microsoft's Windows operating system as he cited several instances the software giant made "anti-trust violations" in undermining the platform-neutral development platform.

Baltimore district court Judge J. Frederick Motz on Dec. 23 penned the historic ruling in favor of Sun Microsystems in its suit against Microsoft for alleged violations in the anti-trust law in scrapping support for Java in its current version of the Windows operating system, Windows XP. Motz issued preliminary injunctions on Sun's copyright infringement claim against Microsoft, and an order for the software giant to incorporate the latest version of the Java Virtual Machine software in Windows XP.

Microsoft long viewed Java as a competitive threat to proprietary technology embedded in Windows, which has been ruled as a monopoly in the software market.

Motz claimed Microsoft's junking of Java clearly benefited its own .Net technology, which ubiquitously connects computer resources and information through XML-based services, which is largely seen as its own version of Sun's "write once, run everywhere" technology and is at the core of the copyright infringement claim.

With Java in Windows, Microsoft's .Net strategy would be altered completely or could end in disarray. It forces Microsoft to re-plot its roadmap to accommodate technology that could spell doom for its dominance in the software arena. That, for Microsoft, is unthinkable.

But Sun should savor its victory and expect a most grueling war ahead when trials start. At stake: the future of computing itself.

Questions raised over P250-M DBM project

From page B10

The official said that Budget Secretary Boncodin specifically asked that all proceedings be documented to ensure transparency.

An anti-corruption watchdog, the Procurement Watch Inc., was also made part of the technical evaluation of bids to ensure that no anomaly be committed.

Syquia admitted to being hurt by all the accusations thrown at the agency. He fears that these allegations could delay full implementation of the project on June 2003.

In December, the DBM received a letter from the office of Sen. Ramon Magsaysay, asking the agency to explain allegations brought against it.

Reports even indicate that a congressional inquiry into the allegations is being planned soon. Leading the inquiry would be Senator Magsaysay and House Rep. Harry Angping.

"I think having the inquiry would prove better for the agency, although I fear that the project would likely be delayed," Syquia said.

Syquia said that Villaseñor's claims should come with proof, which, he said, remains elusive.

Interestingly, Syquia remembered Budget Secretary Boncodin mentioning the forum where Villaseñor attempted to corner her with questions on the bidding process.

According to Syquia, Boncodin snapped back at Villaseñor saying that he recognized him as among the losing bidders.

The crowd at the forum roared with laughter.

Early last year, Syquia had defended the project, saying there was no anomaly behind an earlier decision to declare the first public bidding of the government electronic procurement system a failure.

Industry observers say that some bidders influenced the DBM into declaring the public bidding a failure after one bidder was able to make the cut.

Syquia, however, said at that time that it was "highly doubtful and quite impossible" for bidders to influence the various agencies represented in a body that evaluates bids.

Syquia slammed speculations that "influential parties" lobbied for the declaration of the bidding of the procurement service of the DBM as void.

It was stressed that the Procurement Policy Board and the National Economic Development Authority Infrastructure Committee were behind the decision.

Members of the Procurement Policy Board include top-level officials of central agencies in government including the Department of Health, Department of Public Works and Highways, and Neda. Inter-agency Bids and Awards Committee chair Eduardo Opida declared that no one from among the 19 bidders who submitted eligibility requirements on July 10 passed.

Industry sources, however, insisted that one of the bidders did pass the eligibility test, but government decided to declare the bidding a failure.

"They felt that since only one passed, there was no competition," an industry source had said earlier.

Government rules in bidding state that "if only one bidder is found eligible, or only one bidder responded to the invitation to bid, the agency concerned shall consider the lone eligible bidder as valid."

Among those who passed the eligibility test include Ayala Systems Technology Inc., Questronix, ePLDT/Ariba, PNB-IBM-OurBid.com consortium, and three local system integrators.

The DBM later decided to relax requirements for the G-EPS to allow more participants in the public rebidding.

During the re-bidding, 16 companies participated. The list was eventually trimmed down to four, and then two after the two bidders were disqualified on "technicalities."

Currently, the web-based Government Electronic Procurement System is being tested. It is considered as a flagship project to eliminate corruption in government procurement through the use of IT.

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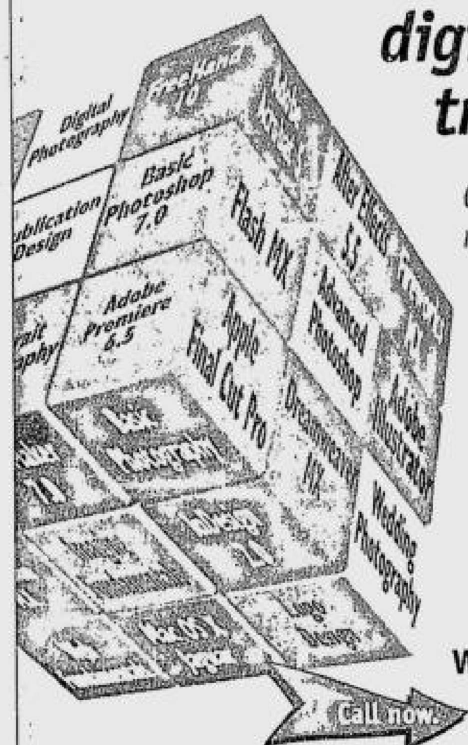


Buffy the vampire slayer

From page B10

floating in empty space aren't going to attract tourists, and the tour guides are murderous.

In Buffy, you won't really be overwhelmed by your opponents. The most you'll have to fight at the same time is about a half-dozen or so. Also, you have a window of opportunity for taking out the first baddie quickly before the other one reaches you.

The thing about the vampires is that you have to finish them off by staking them, putting a crossbow bolt through their heart or decapitating them. For the skeletons, zombies and giant spiders, however, just beat them to a pulp—one of the most amusing and gory scenes is stomping on skeletons, who keep fighting even after losing their limbs.

Stakes and other melee weapons also have "health meters" of their own, and after this is used up they'll break. The good thing is that shovels break into spears and spears break into stakes, but stakes, well, break into useless pieces. If you don't have a weapon handy, you can break a table or chair and pick a stake from the pieces.

We review this game on the XBox

Another thing is that stakes or other melee weapons are knocked out of your grasp if an enemy hits you. In later stages, the vamps will actually pick up your fallen weapon—it's no fun being bashed on the head with your own shovel! Also, you can mix the holy water or hellfire vials you'll discover in different nooks and crannies with your crossbow bolts, to create blessed or hellfire bolts. And don't forget to do some exploring and break the crates you'll find around—some of them will contain precious health elixirs or crystals that can permanently increase your attributes.

Early in the game, you'll run into special types of vampires—big bruisers who won't be fazed by your attacks. I died several times before finding out that you should run past them. Sometimes discretion really is the better part of valor. Also, the boss vampires include not only Spike but also shapeshifters, including a female snake vampire and a male tiger vamp. Then there are the reality-altering Dreamer demons and the Necromancer. In fact, The Master is the dorkiest of the lot.

My main gripe about Buffy is the lack of an in-game save feature. Stages are automatically saved once you clear them. This means that even if you're just inches or one bad guy away from completing it when you die, you have to start all over again at the beginning of the stage. This can get very frustrating, particularly since some stages have many instant death scenarios.

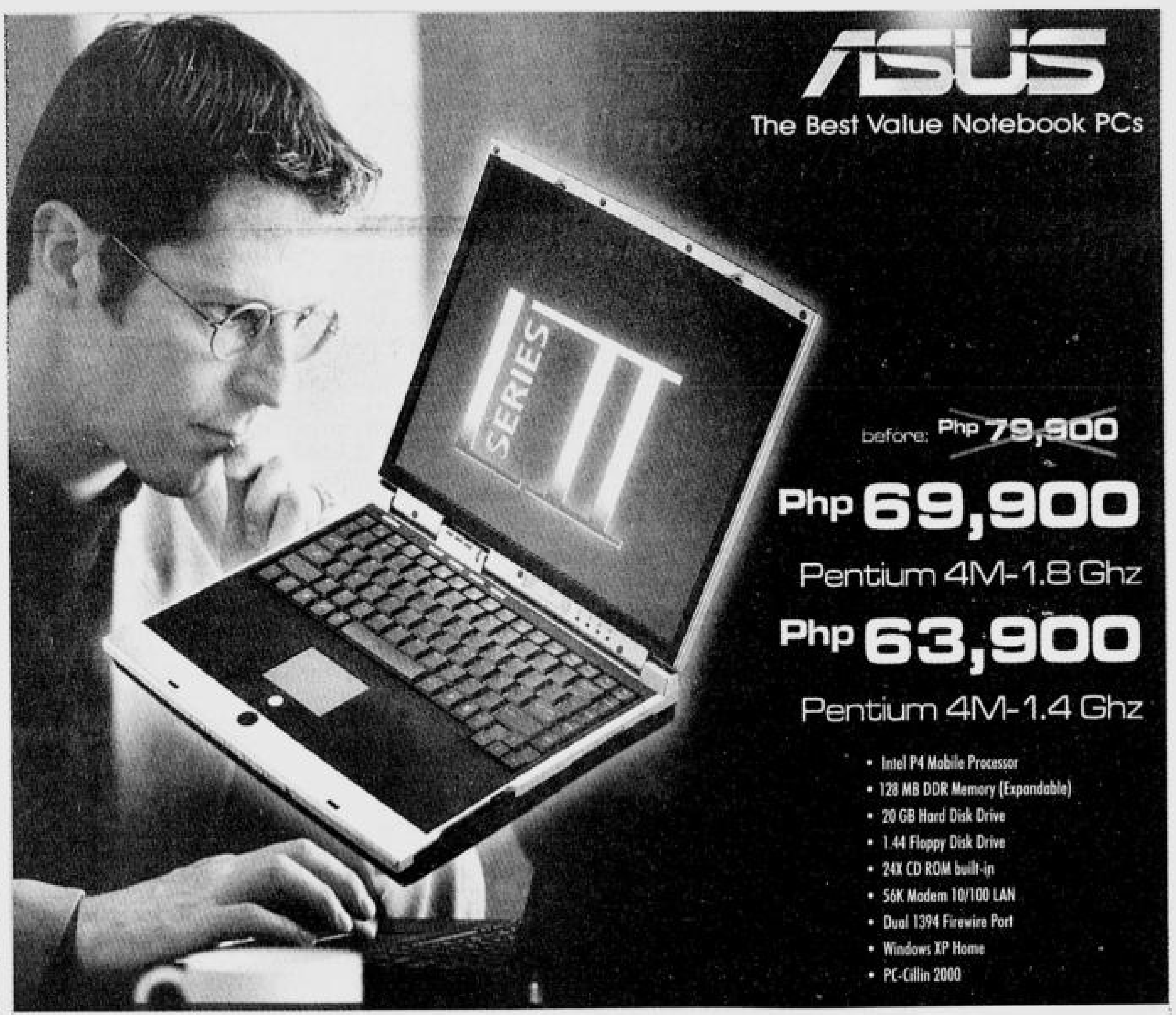
Also, the game is very linear—unless Buffy muses aloud that there has to be a key or switch somewhere, locked doors mean that you won't have to pass that way. You can't go back and explore the previous stages. This is OK because the whole point of the game is the fighting, not role-playing or exploration. Still, it can get annoying to walk around, waiting to stumble into the final foe that would trigger the next event, only to find that the idiot vampire was all along perched on a rooftop somewhere and doesn't feel like attacking you. That's why you have a crossbow.

Another thing you'll notice is a definite quantum leap in game difficulty toward the end. The funny thing about Buffy is that the early levels are harder than the middle parts, where you're mostly fighting slow skeletons, and then becomes almost frustratingly hard near the end. Just go through the bridge of fire and you'll know what I mean.

With 43 levels and 13 missions, Buffy is fun but it's a short adventure. In fact, I have to say that the final boss fight was a bit of a letdown, let alone the cutscene epilogue. It's as if after doing a great job throughout the game, the folks at The Collective simply ran out of ideas for the ending. And once Buffy ends, that's it—you don't unlock new characters, costumes or other goodies. No multiplayer. And not really much incentive to play the game again. It would have been nice if you could play some levels or missions as Angel, Xander, or other Buffy characters.

Still, Buffy is fun while it lasts, and the witty repartee and character interaction behind the show's charm are evident in the video game. Buffy's lines include "Oh look, a sparkly thingy, to add to my collection of other sparkly thingies" and "You call yourself a demon? Pathetic." And the funniest line from a vampire you've just killed: "Killed by a cheerleader, I'm so ashamed."

So, Buffy may not be perfect, but it's a solid Xbox title for your game library. I can't wait for the sequel—maybe they'll go for Glory?



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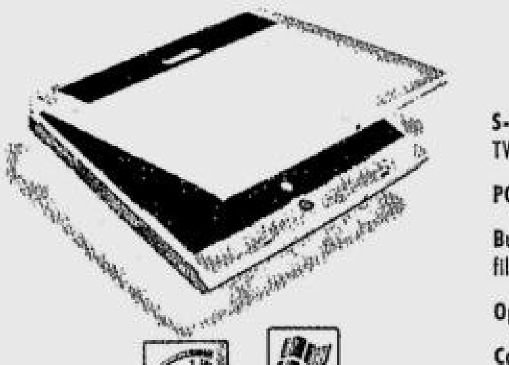

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BusinessMonday

Business Features Editor Margie Quimpo-Espino

Will GMA's Plan 747 fly high for the poor?

By Dennis M. Arroyo
Contributor

NOW that President Macapagal-Arroyo is no longer shooting for 2004, she can focus more on her job, particularly the fight against poverty.

What then is her game plan on the poverty front? It can be found in Plan 747, which aims for 7 percent annual growth for seven years.

Pushed by her new Neda Chief Romulo Neri, the strategy is outlined in a speech by House Speaker Jose de Venecia. (Neri had led the House's economic think tank.)

Plan 747 speaks of rapid growth, mobilizing funds, sharpening global effectiveness, upgrading state capacity, promoting competition and other concerns. This article will focus on measures that directly help the poor.

The countryside is the home of 3 out of every 4 poor Filipinos. As such, Plan 747 looks after the rural sector to make growth work more for the poor. Key to this is to modernize agriculture.

PLAN 747 looks after the rural sector to make growth work more for the poor.

High-value crops

The government will promote high-value crops. As pointed out in the speech, a hectare of rice provides the farmer a net income of only P15,000. This area, if planted to asparagus, pepper, cacao, cashew or ubi, would yield at least P100,000.

Another priority is irrigation. Many farmers are jobless during the dry season due to the lack of water for planting. Irrigation solves this problem, so the government will widen irrigated farmland by 1.5 million hectares over three years. This entails building new systems and fixing old ones clogged by silt.

Water catchments will play a critical role in irrigation. They are small reservoirs dug in the farm to collect water during the rainy season for use during the summer. These pools are easy to build and do not cost much.

They allow farmers to plant multiple crops and grow fish as well.

Revive fisheries

Plan 747 aims to revitalize the fisheries and marine sector, the income source of 1.4 million families. Fisherfolk will be drawn to more efficient technologies. For example, saltwater fish farming yields a return 10 times greater than brackish fishponds.

The state will improve access to rural credit. One means is to bring Landbank back to its original intent of serving small entrepreneurs and producers.

The government wants to plant one billion trees. Replanting is essential, as the nation's forests have shrunk to less than 5 million hectares. The need is urgent in Mindanao, Samar, Leyte, Cebu, the Bicol provinces, and northern Luzon. New trees will provide wealth for communities and income from fruits. They will protect the soil from further erosion.

Cooperatives

Another key program is to consolidate land through cooperatives. Indonesia and Malaysia are global leaders in palm oil, cacao and rubber, as they merged these crop lands into nucleus estates. When farmers are united into cooperatives, they can hit the production scale needed for the export market.

Plan 747 upholds land stewardship and an idle land tax. Some of the rich invest in land then leave it idle so as to resell it later at higher prices. "But speculation distorts the social concept of wealth as stewardship," argues the Plan. Hence a tax on idle lands will curb speculation and push the owners to make the land productive. The strategy also calls for a national land use policy to clear up the rules for land conversion.

Agri-based industry

Another rural pillar is agriculture-based industrialization. The government will diffuse technology for food processing. It will build networks and support marketing programs. That will multiply micro-enterprises and link them with big food companies.

Plan 747 looks at enhancing the assets of the poor.

One means is to index the education and health budgets to the growth of GNP. This ensures that public funds for basic education and primary health care will always be available. They are top national priorities, so the budgets for these concerns should not be sacrificed.

In 1997 the budget for primary health care was only one percent of GNP. In contrast, the World Health Organization recommends a minimum of 5 percent. The budgets will also be adjusted to promote more preventive health care. As it is, health funds are spent most on curative care, like public hospitals.

Investing a little more on preventive care greatly cuts back the need for curative care.

Another program is to widen the coverage of public health insurance. This will be achieved through greater cooperation between the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. and local government units.

Pharmaceutical costs

The government aims to cut the cost of pharmaceuticals. Medicines in the Philippines are relatively expensive, compared to those in other Asean countries. Hence, inputs used to manufacture the drugs will be liberalized.

Plan 747 will enhance common entitlements in education. The state will grant greater access to the young poor for skills training programs.

Another option is the use of education vouchers: the government can subsidize the college education of the Top 3 graduates of every public high school in the 20 poorest provinces.

Shelter is a vital pillar: the Plan includes building 750,000 houses over three years. This will not only create homes but will also generate employment. Because construction involves many sub-industries, setting up just one house creates 6 to 7 skilled jobs.

Fueling rapid growth is key to lifting millions out of poverty, but that is the subject of another article. *Comments to <darroyo-@philonline.com>*

Bank has new CEO

MORRIS

LONDON-based Standard Chartered Bank's group chief executive officer has announced the appointment of Simon Morris, as CEO/Head-Consumer Banking of SCB Philippines.

Morris, 44, a British national, joins SCB Philippines from SCB Brunei where he was CEO/Head-Consumer Banking. His responsibilities included corporate governance, strategic direction, business and operational responsibility.

His career with the bank spans 18 years starting in 1985 as regional manager of Chartered Trust Plc., a member of the Standard Chartered Group.

Morris obtained his MBA in the UK. He is married with two children.

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Integrated Retail Applications

MAPPING THE FUTURE

Manuel A. Alcuaz Jr.

WE will now describe how SMRs (Small and Medium Retailers) should use IT in an integrated manner.

Integrated Retail Applications (IRAs) consist of three major application systems: (1) Point of Sale (POS) and Sales Management; (2) Purchasing and Inventory Management; and (3) Financials.

The primary objectives of IRA systems are to increase revenues through customer satisfaction, improve margins through better management and procurement, and avoid losses through better control.

POS systems should fulfill the following objectives: customer satisfaction through faster hassle free transactions, accurate billing and correct charges, capture sales and receivables transactions, provide info for sales analysis and inventory management, and improve cash control.

POS systems

POS systems have evolved over the years and have a range of functionality. The range of systems would include manual paper and pen, cash register, ECR (electronic cash register), and computerized POS systems.

While most large retailers have moved into computer-based POS systems, a lot of small retailers remain on less sophisticated systems including manual pen and paper.

A retailer with very low transaction volume and with trusted people at the store could get by, even without a simple cash register.

However, only a computer-based POS can meet all the objectives we have defined. But do not assume that simply because a POS uses a computer, it will do what you need. You still have to do a thorough evaluation.

There are a variety of POS systems so we will discuss some key variations:

A. Nature of computer hardware (proprietary computer system, or standard PC).

While proprietary vendors will have many reasons they will point to as advantages, I think that PC-based systems have the edge in price performance, future growth, and maintenance and support.

B. Application software—developed from scratch or package (standard).

Customized software could potentially give you a better fit. Most retailers do not really have unique requirements. It takes longer and costs more to develop from scratch. You can pay and wait and sometimes end up with nothing.

Standard software is like RTW clothing. It might not have a 100-percent fit but what you see is what you get.

You have a wide choice of POS applications. Foreign developers with larger markets may have hardware that looks more integrated and more specifically designed as a POS but would cost more. Local developers/integrators would have systems that are more modular and generic. If you need enhancements and customization, it will be faster and cheaper with a local developer.

Sales systems

Sales Management/Merchandising System

A single-location SMR could get by with reports generated by a single POS. However, if you have many product lines, multiple POS systems, several branches, etc., a Sales Management System will become important.

A Sales Management System should provide centralized product and price control, and extensive sales analysis by product, product line, department, outlet, etc.

The Sales Management System will also provide integration of varied POS systems, receivables management, and inventory management.

Purchasing and inventory

Purchasing and inventory management are very important application for retailers. Key objectives of a purchasing application would include low cost, quality and prompt delivery.

An inventory management system should monitor inventory levels and movement, trigger reorders, and integrate with sales management and purchasing.

Inventory management becomes complex and difficult due to volume of transactions, number of different items and variations, and/or multiplicity of locations. Your concern will depend on the nature of your business. A grocery or supermarket could carry thousands of items, a clothing and fashion store would have less items but would have to track sizes and colors in addition to styles. In most cases, you would have to track inventory in multiple locations.

You have to be careful in buying inventory management software, particularly because you would like a system that will meet your current needs and provide for future growth. You don't want an application that holds you back instead of supporting and enabling growth and profitability. Among the key features you should be looking for are ability to handle thousands of items; multiple locations; multiple units of measure; sufficient grouping and description fields; vendor and vendor item code fields; vendor records; current and historical data; ordering parameters and processes; varied transactions including receiving, transfers, issues, returns, sales; and security for info access and transactions.

Purchasing applications should provide for quick and accurate ordering of required merchandise. The purchasing application should support requests for new merchandise, purchase requests for standard items, comparison of prices, updating of vendor quotations, purchase order generation and tracking, integration with inventory receiving, and security for access and transactions.

Financial applications

In addition to the core operational applications we have discussed, SMRs also need financial applications which include receivables management, payables management, bank reconciliation and general ledger and budgeting.

There is no question that if your business was very small, you could get by with a manual accounting system. However, even if you are small rather than medium, you may find that computerized financial applications can give you better and faster information that justify their cost. There are a range of financial applications which SMRs can consider. These range from QuickBooks at the low end to Microsoft Great Plains Dynamics at the higher end. The low end applications generally provide less analytical functionality and a lesser ability to modify the forms, reports and processes.

I will point out some key features you should be looking for in each application.

For Receivables Management, you would be looking for the ability to handle trade and non-trade receivables, provide aging analysis, provide partial application of payments to invoices, and facilitate billing of credit card companies.

For Payables Management, you would again look for the capability to handle trade and non-trade payables, provide aging analysis, pay vouchers partially, issue checks per voucher, and issue single check for multiple vouchers.

Bank Reconciliation should make it easy to balance your accounts and avoid issuing checks with insufficient funds. Bank Reconciliation features should include: (1) straightforward, consistent approach to managing your bank transactions; (2) saves time, lowers administrative costs and gives you tight control over this important business process; (3) bank-related transactions flow, bank reconciliation from other dynamics modules, making it easy to group receipts for deposit and reconcile bank statements; (4) enter transactions directly in Bank Reconciliation, allowing for adjustments and tracking transactions not recorded in the subledgers; (5) reconciling bank statements is fast and efficient, with the flexibility to make adjustments as needed for full audit control; (6) bank transactions recorded can be traced back to their originating source transactions in other modules, making it easy and fast to follow up on bank-to-bank discrepancies; and (7) full complement of checkbook, history, and audit trail reports gives you complete accountability at every stage of the reconciliation process.

The General Ledger (GL) is the core of your financial applications. It should facilitate the preparation of Profit and Loss, Balance Sheet, and Cash Flow Reports. You should be looking for the following features in the GL you will acquire: (1) integration with other financial modules as well as with operational applications; (2) ability to provide analytical reports by product lines, branches, etc.; (3) budgeting capabilities; (4) integration with office tools such as Spreadsheets; and compatibility with Microsoft Office.

(The author is President of Systems Sciences Consult Inc. Feedback at mapsec@globenet.com.ph)

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LIFESTYLE
Arts & Design
Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso Subsection Editor Lito Zulueta

Peta finds a permanent address

The pioneer theater group will construct in Quezon City what promises to be a leading performing arts complex in private hands

CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE? No, Peta members aren't restaging the famous Brecht play. They are prayerfully laying the cornerstone for the Peta complex on E. Rodriguez Ave.

By Leah Salterio

THIRTY-SIX years ago, the Philippine Educational Theater Association (Peta) was born. It sought to establish a national theater movement that would take root in communities, schools and anywhere else so that theater could become an integral part in people's lives.

Since then, Peta has mounted more than 300 productions and performed before thousands of people, not just in theater houses, but also in school auditoriums, basketball courts, town plazas and streets, both here and abroad.

Peta was founded by Cecile Guidote Alvarez on April 7, 1967. But not even the exile of Alvarez because of Martial Law in 1972 hindered Peta's growth as a theater committed to social change.

Now, as then, Peta is active in the national theater movement. The theater company has become both cradle and home to prominent artists and individuals who have shared their talents and expertise with television, the movies, print, radio, education and other theater groups.

For more than three decades now, Peta's home has been the Rajah Sulayman open-air theater in Fort Santiago in Intramuros. National Artist for architecture Leandro Locsin created a theater designed from the war ruins of the fort and donated it to Peta.

The company was given the green light to use the open-air theater for its productions by

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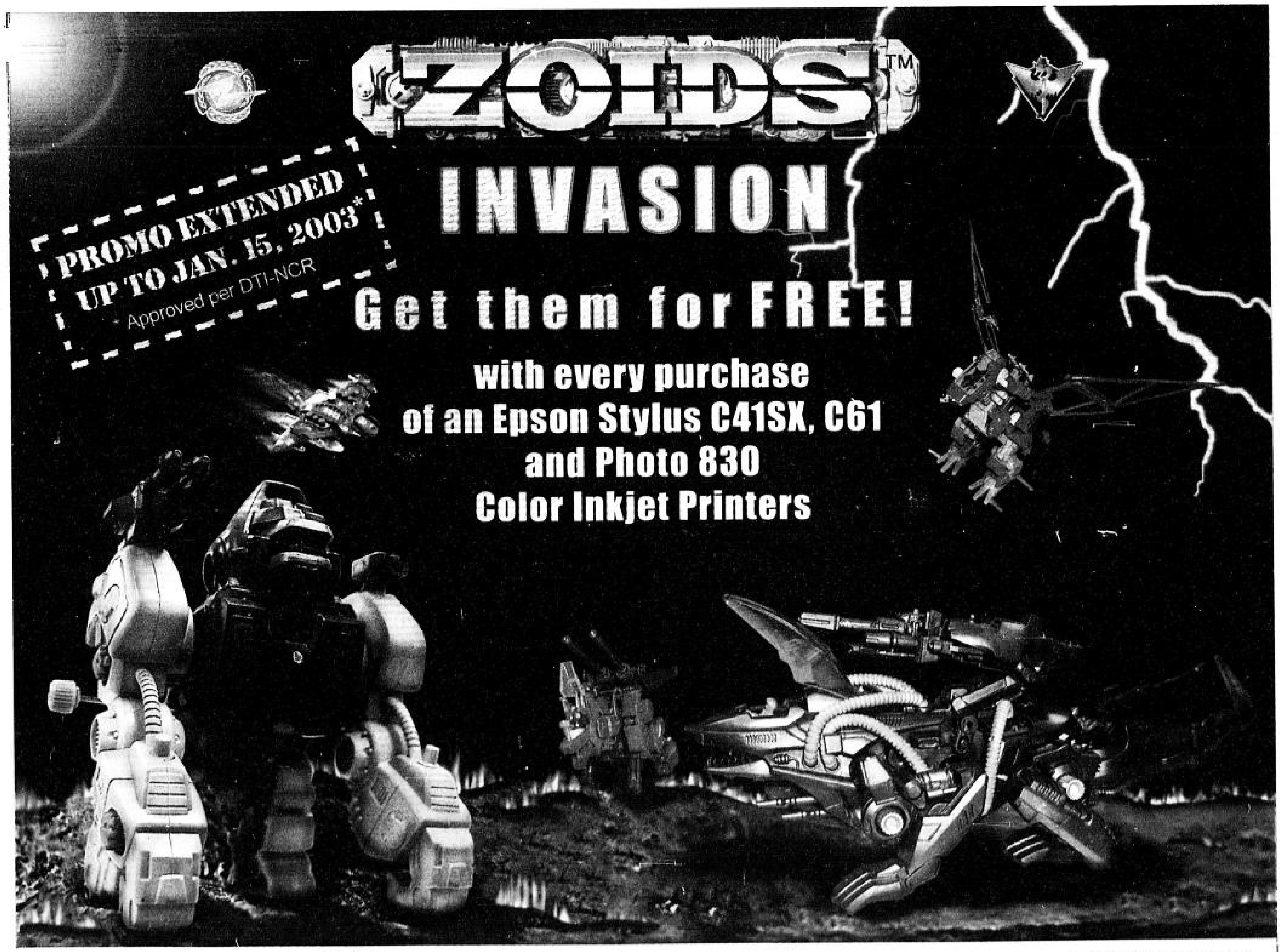
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Mixed bag of goodies in annual art contest

By Gino Dormiendo
Contributor

THE AAP Annual is, arguably, the one contest of the year that Filipino artists—of all kinds of persuasions and predilections—earnestly look forward to and rigorously prepare for.

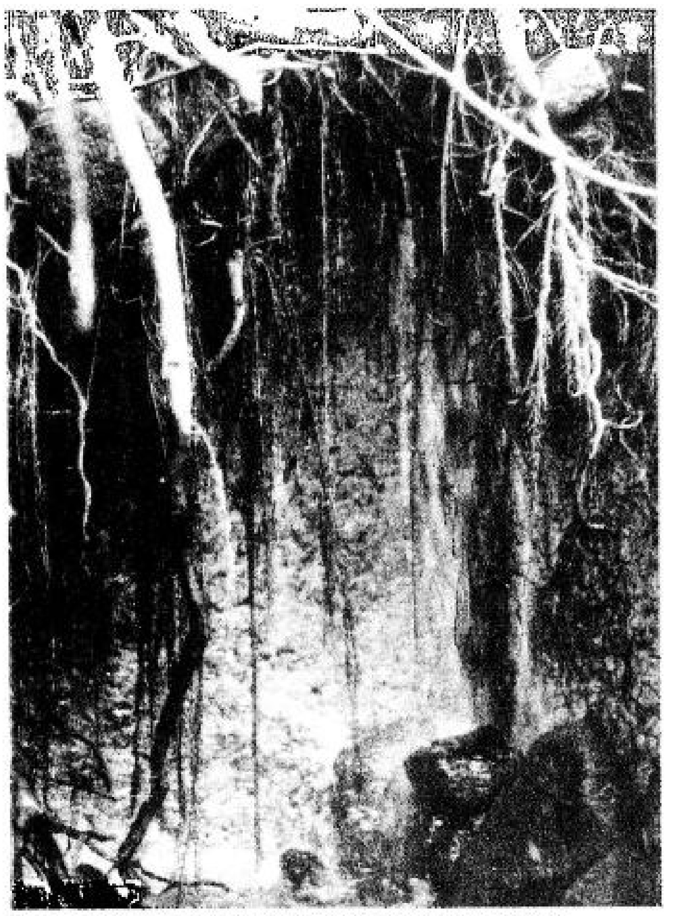
Unlike other competitions associated with big business, the Art Association of the Philippines' Annual has a longer track record. Now 55, the AAP Annual is much more senior than the rest and has, for all intents and purposes, generally espoused greater freedom in the name of art.

Thus, in the latest staging of the Annual, which presumably took much longer to prepare than the actual event itself, nearly 400 entries vied for the awards in painting, sculpture, mixed media, drawing, photography, printmaking and the newest category of digital art. Almost half of the entries were, as expected, in painting, and a quarter of the total were in mixed media. Print, regrettably, had only three.

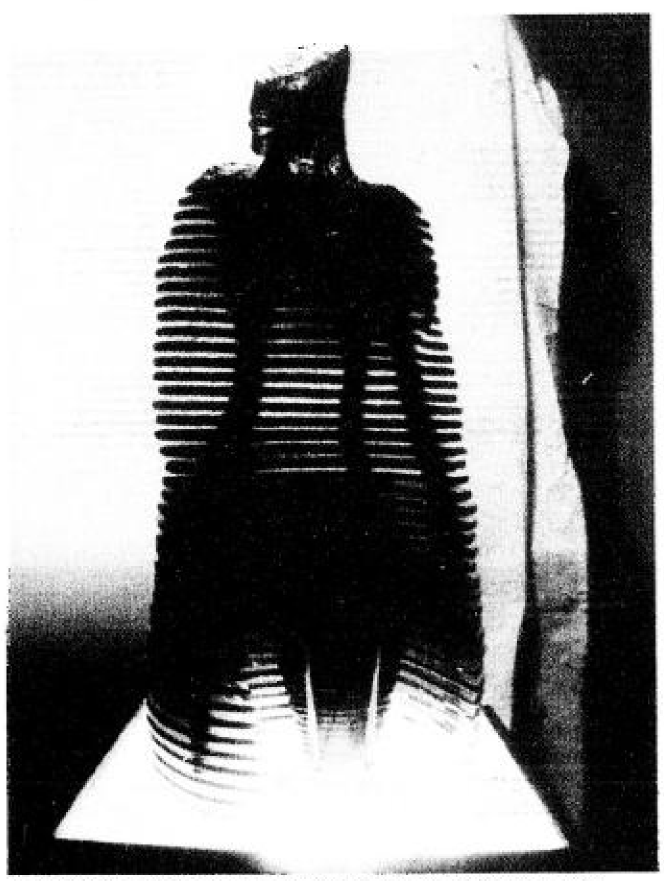
Only a handful of paintings that made it to the judges' final shortlist were a cut above the rest. They merged both craft and substance, not to mention having the all-important vision that separated the boys from the men.

As expected, an overwhelming number of entries opted to go representational, while a few combined abstract and figurative elements in mix-and-match fashion. Many of the entries also fell prey to depicting literally what should have been symbolically or allegorically presented.

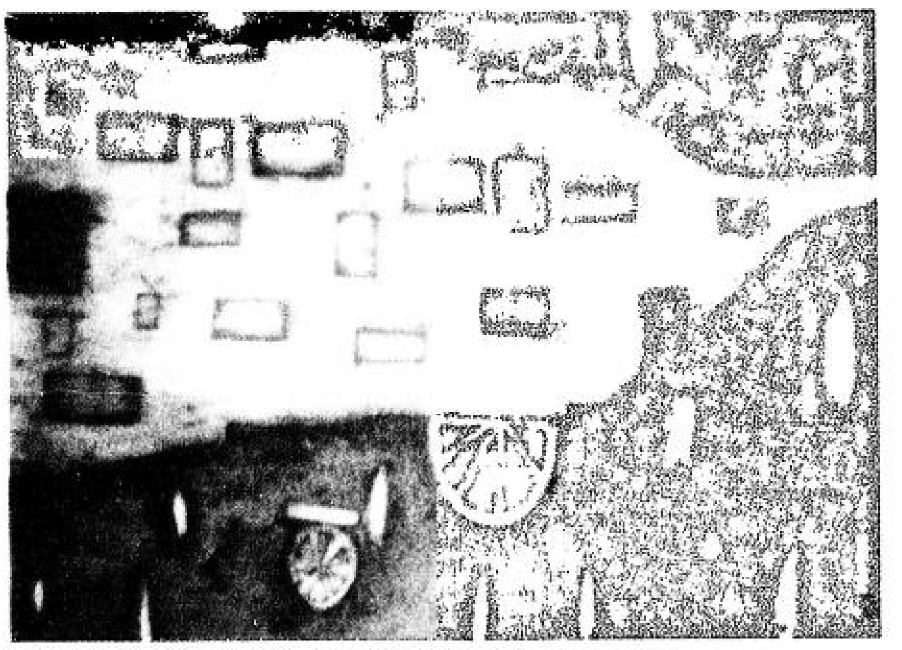
Several were either just showing what their titles indicated or simply giving away their message without the slightest attempt to provoke the viewer. Some artists, especially the younger ones, tended to squeeze in more elements than necessary, thus diminishing the work's impact, or ending up like, well, a mixed bag of messages.



"LIHIM ng Barrio Balaybay," by Grace Bengco, photo print



"PAGHUBOG (Sculpting the Youth of Tomorrow)," by Joey Ong, glass and metal

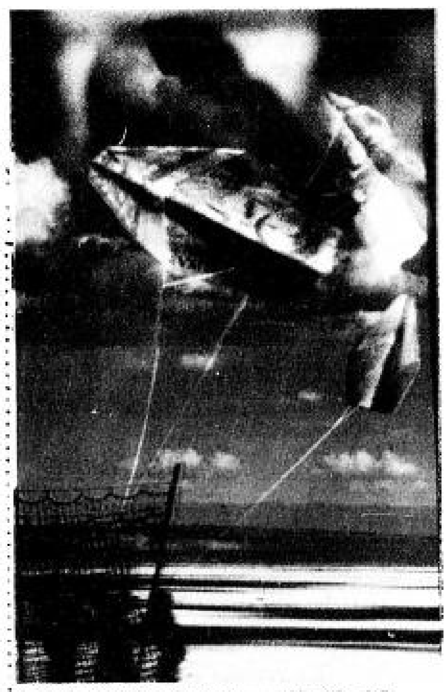


"MINARET Chamber Cycle," by Jason R. Ronidel, print

Eye-catching

Of the six that vied for the top honors, two were, each in its own way, as eye-catching as they were mind-boggling. The first prize winner, "Xen-O-Taph," an oil-and-acrylic piece by advertising artist Bonifacio Jimenez, is a maze of images in diptych format, tied up by what look like dangling intestines. On closer view, the painting shows much more than what the eye can see: a mass grave of victims of genocide, a horrifying sight to behold, but powerfully sending the message that this is the horror of all terrors.

Second prize winner, "The Impostor (False Prophet: Good Business)," by Dennis Gonzales, is a highly provocative work in oil that has touches of realism, Dada, surrealism and Amboy pop art. It shows people's two-sided persona, the good and the bad, the sublime and the profane, and their ability to cloak themselves in various guises and disguises. Wittily, too, it comments (though not subtly enough) on American hegemony and how the culture has intruded into the minds and hearts of the Pinoy, as represented by the character of Mickey Mouse, perhaps the king of American comic heroes.



"DANCES With Turbulence," by Noel O. Pama Sr., Photoshop image

The abstract work "Black Titled," by Joseph Lofranco, third prize, incorporates several elements normally associated with primitive art. It is a strong, solid piece, even though the Miroesque touch is a little prevalent in the execution.

Two of the honorable mention winners—"Stranded Dilemmas" by Parker Encisa and "Anak, Asan Ka?" by Marvin Baldemor—figured strongly in the judges' deliberations.

> The AAP Annual has generally espoused greater freedom in the name of art

Worth viewing

Other entries well worth viewing: Wilfredo Rufon's ecological statement, "Mayaman ang Dagat Noon, May Yaman Pa Ngayon, Bukas Kaya?"; Richard Boa's "Tribal Confusion," Marvin Samonte's "Sabah, ba?," as well as his brother Edmond's "Juan Dreamscape" and Ronaldo Ruiz's "Nimda."

As in painting, sculpture yielded an infinitely better harvest this year. Joey Ong's "Paghubog (Sculpting the Youth of Tomorrow)" is a disarmingly simple but eloquent glass-and-metal construction, with its shaft of electronic light emanating from the bottom of the piece. Norman Tiotuico's "Kalavat Vakat," made of fiberglass and driftwood, has two large poles and a giant orb hanging from it and revealing what appears to be the embryonic shape of an evolving creature. Rodel Rillera's "Makinarya ni Juan," a contraption of cut bamboo poles, shows the elemental farm implements, with the horn of the beast thrown in for accent, if not as conversation piece.

Equally provocative is Ramon Garcia's "Masterpiece," which alludes to the finished product molded by the artist's hand and imagination. Eduardo Madrid's "Fertility" in *molave* and steel has a giant phallus emerging, as it were, from captivity, symbolized by the chain that partly binds it.

Innovative

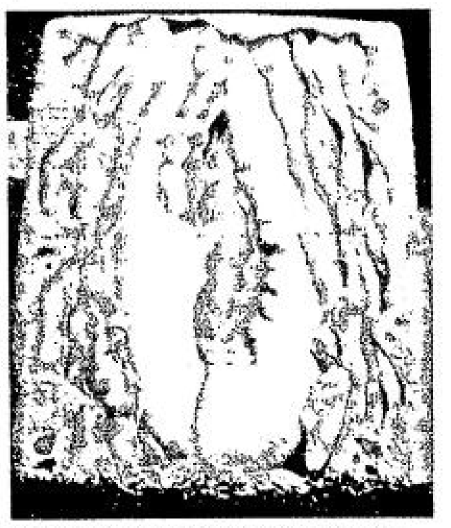
The mixed-media entries showed the Filipino artist's innovative spirit and propensity for experimentation. The top prize, Melvin John Ante's "Resurgence of Life," made of recycled paper, natural fibers, cardboard and other media, shows a breathing, pulsating stillborn embryo lodged in its nest. Second prize winner "Tuso man ang Matsing, Napaglalangan Din," by Wilson Belarmino, is a dig on that social folly that goes by the name of monkey business. It shows a series of husked coconut shells painted with the faces of animals associated with wily and deceitful conduct.

Third prize winner, Salvador Ching's "Ikalimang Misteryo," has Warhol's famous technique in Campbell soup transplanted into the religious icon of the crucified Christ, deconstructed in 25 different ways.

A number of entries have an ample share of play and interplay with various kinds of media, though a fair number were more properly paintings, save for slight touches of found or recycled objects incorporated into the pieces.

Drawing has its own share of worthy pieces, promising ones mainly because of their creators' skills.

The judges decided to give the prize to an abstract charcoal piece, "Let Me Sigh," by Buen Franklin Anthony Calubayan, which had predominantly blue surface and textural effects. Second is Noel Pama's "Convergence" drawn with a ballpoint, which shows the form of a tree inside out to reveal the interior. Joseph Espina's "Untitled" work, also in ball pen, is mildly interesting with its patched-up amorphous shapes that, on longer scrutiny, look like a primitive monument.



"RESURGENCE of Life," by Melvin John B. Ante, mixed media

Joseph Respall's "Malice in the Garden of Eden" resembles a Japanese woodcut print, down to its rendering of lines and chiaroscuro.

Meager lot

Then there are the photographs, a meager lot, quantity- and quality-wise, indicative of the dearth of reliable photographers around (or is it simply a lack of interest in this medium?). The top prize (there were no second or third prize winners) went to Grace Bengco's "Lihim ng Barrio Balaybay," a Gothic photograph of a virginal nook in some distant forest, showing in detail the gnarled and twisted roots of trees, and water flowing into huge boulders below them. Most of the entries fell short of the demands of photographic art.

Digital art is not as barren. Noel Pamas' "Dances with Turbulence" has kites flying wildly along a coastline, with the silhouettes of three children dramatically concealed by a net.

Benedict Mendoza's "Manood ng Makita" has a computer-generated image of an extraterrestrial creature, eyes bulging and toying with a remote control while seated on a couch. A bigger image reveals the profile of a viewer, watching what seems to be in his mind, toying with media's fantasy.

Luckily all three entries in printmaking were good enough to vie for the honors, with Jason Ronidel's "Minaret Chamber Cycle" getting the top prize.

In the art criticism category, awarded in honor of the late critic Leo Benesa, there were only three entries and all came after the deadline. Not one of them was deemed good enough to win. Despite the many rich, if disparate images, in the AAP Annual from local artists, apparently none of the entries in the art criticism category was able to articulate them in words.

It was, all told, the only letdown in what otherwise was a bountiful 55th AAP Annual. The present leadership under president Fidel Sarmiento deserves a pat on the back.

The AAP Annual exhibit is on view at the GSIS Museum until Jan. 14.

Project aims to narrow 'digital divide'

THE 20th century marked the onset of the digital age, when e-commerce and information technology became buzzwords and computer literacy the most important skill an individual can possess. If you don't know yet the current meaning of "download" or "surfing," then you have a lot of catching up to do.

In the Philippines, there exists a "digital divide," a line that separates people who own computers from those who don't. This gap continues to widen, though computer literacy is widely being made available. The truth remains that majority of today's youth still have no access to a computer.

This prompted Globe-Isla, which combines the forces of Globe Telecom and its subsidiary, Isla Communications Company, in partnership with the Ayala Foundation Inc. (AFI), the social development arm of Ayala Corp., to come up with the Youth Tech project to help narrow the digital divide.

Youth Tech realizes that, to compete globally, Filipino students have to be at par with international standards in education and training. This entails an ongoing process of keeping an up-to-date knowledge base in new technologies and current innovations. And what can be a better source than the Internet?

Access to right tools

Globe-Isla and AFI, through the Youth Tech project, will help increase the computer literacy of public high school students by giving them access to the right tools. Computer laboratories with Internet and electronic mail connections will be set up. Through the project, free landlines and unlimited Internet usage will be provided to selected schools on the first year. A 50-percent discount will be given on charges for the following years.

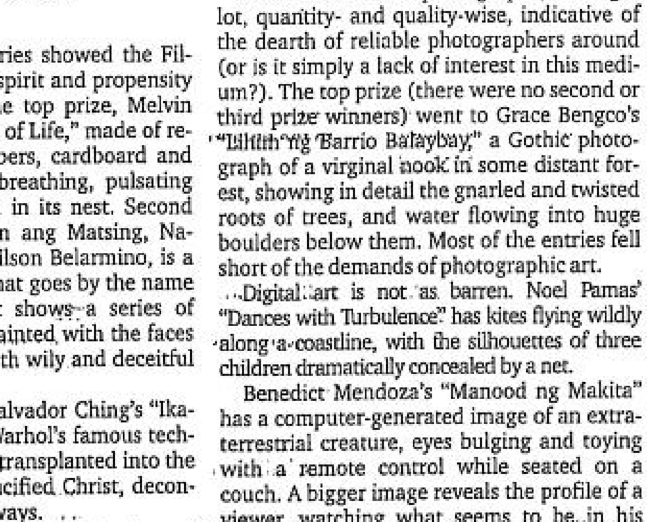
The benefactors are quick to stress that the project is not a dole-out.

"The recipient school has to commit space and facilities for the computer laboratory as well as shoulder the administrative, maintenance and repair costs. Also, the school must send teachers who will undergo Internet training and be able to impart knowledge gained to their students. On a higher level, the division of schools and the school itself must be willing to adopt computer and Internet training as part of the school curriculum," explains Mario A. Deriquito, director of the AFI Center for Social Development.

Youth Tech was launched recently at the Gymnasium of the Inosloban-Marawoy National High School, in Lipa City, Batangas, one of the first to have a computer laboratory. Lipa City Vice Mayor Boy Manguera, AFI director Deriquito, Globe SVP and Islacom COO Gil Genio, Batangas division superintendent of schools Dr. Emma Bautista, Lipa City division superintendent Dr. Cristeto Pamplona, Batangas City division superintendent Dr. Miralinda Ocampo, as well as principals of the nine recipient schools, attended.

A first

The event was also an occasion for the first ever digital signing of the memorandum of agreement by the division superintendents, principals of the recipient schools and representatives of Globe-Isla and AFI. Students watched the proceedings on screen.



The Bernardo Lirio Memorial Experimental Science High School Dance Troupe presented a folk dance that was followed by the unveiling of the Youth Tech marker and the opening of the computer laboratory. Several students tinkered with computers and surfed the Net for the first time.

Youth Tech computer laboratories have been set up so far at the San Pedro National High School, Bernardo Lirio National High School, Gov. Feliciano Leviste Memorial National High School, Lipa City National High School, Pinagkawitan National High School, Banaba West National High School, Tabangao National School and Balete National High School.

So far, a total of 47 schools have benefited from the project—19 in Luzon and 28 in the Visayas—giving Internet access to almost 20,000 students.

Cultural heritage gains in 2002

SPACED OUT

Augusto F. Villalon

WE can't say that the preservation of heritage was on a roll last year. But it was very much in the national profile for 2002, albeit on a lower scale than the previous year when tension ran high over the Mehan Garden controversy.

The Heritage Conservation Society (HCS) opposed any construction on Mehan Garden, one of the few remaining open spaces in central Manila. The construction of a City College of Manila campus threatened the derelict park. Moreover, the construction of the Park and Ride building on another end of Mehan Garden continued, in defiance of a Department of Natural Resources cease-and-desist order. And the Arroceros Forest Park was threatened with the proposed construction of a City of Manila facility.

Despite press releases from Manila City Hall that a solution has been found for Mehan Garden that allows the construction of the college while "respecting" the archaeological values of the site and that a solution is being studied for the Arroceros Forest Park, the HCS remains firm in its position: no construction in either. The fight to protect open spaces in Manila continues.

A report by Trixie Angeles, the executive director of the HCS, shows that 2002 was far from quiet for the Society. Most of its activities focused on enhancing the conservation awareness of the public and improving the national and local legal framework for heritage conservation.

Angeles and volunteer Greg Dorris helped set the corporate structure of the Cebu Heritage Society and paved the way for its affiliation with the HCS. They also assisted in organizing the Carcar Heritage Conservation Society, where the owners of ancestral houses in the heritage town of Carcar in Cebu banded together to preserve the town. HCS also helped the drafting of the first-ever heritage ordinance of the town.

HCS representatives met with Undersecretary Antonio Oppus of the DENR and officials of Silliman University. They worked out changes in the proposed wharf to be constructed in front of Silliman. The changes will now ensure that the marine ecology will remain in balance. It further ensures that the heritage qualities of the campus are retained. The HCS also made representation with the National Historical Institute for declaring Silliman as a historic site.

In Mindanao, HCS held meetings to train locals in heritage management methods aimed at preserving the threatened Huluga Caves site in Cagayan de Oro. Clear boundaries for the archaeological site were drawn up and following international practice, the site was encircled with a buffer zone for further protection.

HCS volunteers assisted in the organization of the regional Culture and Arts Council in Butuan and conducted a seminar on the conservation of built heritage.

HCS members attended the public hearing on the comprehensive land use program of Manila, sharing their insights and making sure that heritage inputs were included in the final plan. They also attended hearings at the DENR that discussed the granting of environmental clearance certificates for sites with archaeological value.

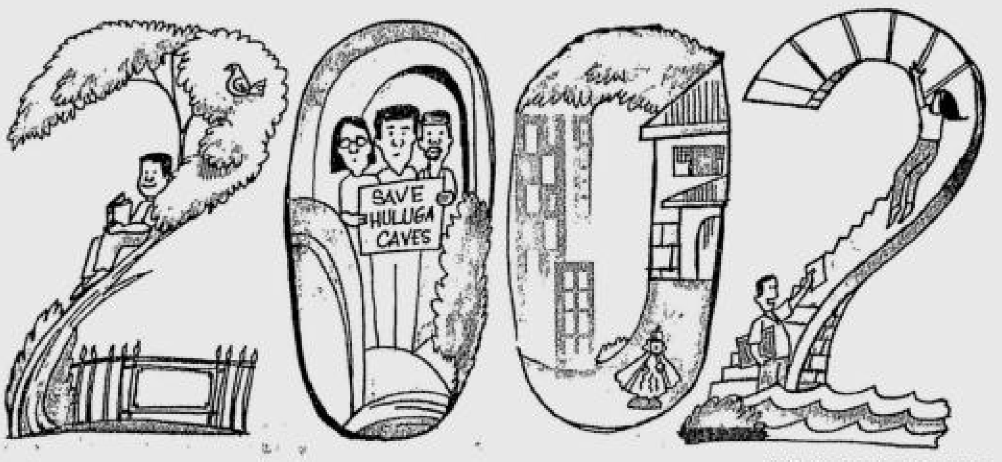


ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

Still on a voluntary basis, HCS lawyers have been assisting the National Museum to write the rules and regulations on national treasures and other regulatory aspects of the National Museum Law. Likewise, the same lawyers are assisting in the drafting of the implementing rules and regulations for the National Historical Commission.

The HCS Walking Tours have become increasingly popular. Regular Sunday afternoon walks through Manila heritage areas, Escolta, Intramuros, and the Cultural Center of the Philippines Complex are held. Special tours have gone to the San Miguel district near Malacañang, the North Cemetery, Luneta, San Beda Chapel and Far Eastern University. Provincial tours have been organized to Malolos and San Miguel de Mayumo in Bulacan.

Meanwhile, HCS members have donated volumes to probably the first library in the country specializing in heritage literature. The library, located at the HCS Secretariat at the Museo Pambata Building on Rizal Park, is open to the public.

The strides that have been achieved in the past year in the cause of heritage are significant. Thanks are in order to the HCS volunteers who carry on the heritage work. Student members have multiplied and the energy of the young members have brought new vibrancy to the organization.

A prosperous 2003 to all.

E-mail the author at afv@pacific.net.ph

Peta finds a permanent address

From page C1

the government, through the late National Parks Development Committee executive director Teodoro Valencia.

"Peta could stage plays in Fort Santiago only during the dry months, usually from December to April," says Jack Yabut, erstwhile Peta marketing and public relations director.

"Our target audience are mostly students. But lately, our theater season has been limited to January to March."

Aside from the limited use of the performance venue, Yabut laments that only evening shows have been viable and the constant threat of rain has caused many costly delays and cancellations of the productions. The worsening traffic situation of the city has also discouraged the audience to go to the far and dark corners of old Manila.

Yabut joined Peta in 1976 when he was still a teenager. The executive director then of the company was the late film great Lino Brocka, who took over from Alvarez when the latter left for the US during Martial Law. Brocka was succeeded by Soxie Topacio.

"When I noticed I was losing my hair as marketing and PR director, I got burned out," says Yabut, who now acts as theater center and school project coordinator.

During the rainy season, Peta staged its productions by renting auditoriums, halls and other performing arts venues.

Peta also has a mobile theater that reaches out to audiences "from the tip of Luzon to as far as Zamboanga," says Yabut.

Milestone plays

A number of Peta plays helped shape not only the company's radical profile, but also the country's theater history.

"Ang Paglalakbay ni Radya Mangandiri" was a fine attempt to create a Filipino Ramayana, according to Yabut.

"Minsa'y Isang Gamu-Gamo" which starred Nora Aunor, was presented in 1991, when the entire country was in a dilemma whether to extend the lease of the American bases or not.

The period play "1896" dramatized the Philippine revolution, with Ariel Rivera in the lead as Katipunero Emilio Jacinto.

Peta's many other noteworthy productions include "Bayaning Huwad," "Larawan," "Hanggang Dito na Lamang at Maraming Salamat," "Juan Tamban," "Macbeth," "Pilipinas Circa 1907" and "Ang Buhay ni Galileo."

PETA founder Cecile Guidote Alvarez

NATIONAL Artist Lino Brocka

Peta sources its funds from local and foreign foundations, plus other generous benefactors who support the company's programs and productions.

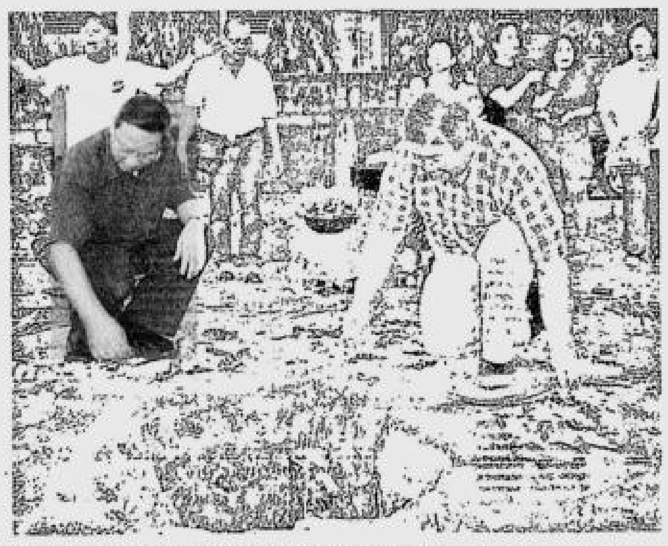
"We get funds from education and development institutions in Europe, America and Japan for our development programs, workshops and curriculum development," Yabut says.

The Dutch non-government organization Inter-Church Coordinating Organization (ICCO) has supported Peta since the early '80s.

Ayala's Children and Youth Foundation of the Philippines also supports Peta's youth programs, according to Yabut.

Now entering its fourth decade, Peta remains inspired by the ideals of nationhood, global understanding, respect of person, democratization and greater participation of the people in theater, culture and social development.

Peta's board of trustees is chaired by Ramon del Rosario Jr., with Fulgencio Factoran Jr. as secretary. Members are INQUIRER president Sandy Prieto-Romualdez, Aurora Silayan-Go, Lisa Gokongwei, Conrado de Quiros, Nicanor Tiongson, Soxie Topacio,



Odette Alcantara and Beng Santos-Cabangon, who is also the new executive director.

PETA board officers Nicanor Tiongson and Ramon del Rosario during the cornerstone laying

New home

Since the late '60s, Peta has dreamed of acquiring a home base of operations for its theater and learning space. Last year, after a four-month search and visits to over 40 properties, the company acquired a 1,006-square meter lot worth P20 million at No. 5 Sunny Side Drive, Barangay Kristong Hari, Quezon City (behind Quezon City Sports Club along E. Rodriguez Avenue).

"The land has been paid for," says Yabut. "We have allotted another P20 million for construction, which will start in July this year. But we are still trying to raise P4 to P6 million for contingency fund and specialized requirement for equipment.

"We want the theater center to be contemporary and very welcoming. Our predecessors weren't able to do it for the company. Either they were just too busy or the conditions to generate the resources weren't just there. But we are very proud that we will soon have a home base."

Yabut is thankful to board members like Prieto-Romualdez, who has joined the working group as member of the theater center project supervising committee.

The theater center, which is expected to be completed in April 2004, will finally provide a fixed address for Peta, save millions of pesos in rent and allow the theater group to conduct all its programs, services and training in a permanent and accessible facility.

Designed by architect Andy Locsin, son of the late Leandro Locsin, the theater center "will enable Peta to pursue its vision and mission of a Philippine theater that is truly integrated and vital to the development of people and society," says Yabut.

It will have a 400-seat performance venue, proposed to be named Bulwagang Lino Brocka and dedicated to the memory of National Artist for film and former Peta executive director from 1973 to 1985.

Meanwhile, the learning space is designated as Paaralan ng Peta or the Peta School. It will have two classrooms that can be joined to expand into a common hall and can be used for workshops, seminars and regular courses.

Yabut points out the theater center will increase Peta's ability to conduct more training, educational activities and performances all year-round. The infrastructure will complement, support and sustain the efforts of Peta, its artists and teachers, its national and international partners in theater, education and development.

"We're appealing to the public to support this theater center," says Yabut. "The donor audience should be proud and excited about this project. It is arguably the first theater center and school built, owned and run by a company of players.

"The theater center affirms our belief in the possibilities of Philippine theater. Finally, we have a home. This should serve as an inspiration to other theater companies."

For more information on the Partnership for the Theater Center Fund, call Peta executive director Beng Santos Cabangon at 410-0821 to 22 or 724-9637.

PETA veterans include superstar Nora Aunor (in the 1991 production "Minsa'y Isang Gamu-Gamo")

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When STEPHEN KING ‘8’ is enough

STEPHEN
KING
From a Buick 8
A Novel

Amid talk that he's quitting, the king of horror drives a spooky sedan right off Salem's used car Lot

"From a Buick 8"
By Stephen King
Scribner, New York,
2002, 356 pages

By Ruel S. De Vera

REVIEW

AND now for an encore, Stephen King will make himself disappear. Or so he wants the world to think. Arguably the most successful writer of popular fiction—of any kind—ever, King told everyone who cared to listen last year that he was going to quit. If he does, then, readers everywhere will be deprived of some of the most creative, engrossing fiction ever, ranging from the teenage terror of "Carrie" to the gruesome happenings of "Dreamcatcher" and even the literary riddles of "Bag of Bones." In any case, we will just have to find out for ourselves.

That kind of curious thinking is what is at the heart of King's newest novel, "From a Buick 8," which King admits won't be his last novel—yet. Even if King had no plans of quitting, "Buick" is an interesting "Frankenstein" of a creation—old premises melded with new ideas, familiar techniques laced with mint-condition twists.

Yes, King already has a novel about a scary car—a rather good one actually, in "Christine." That tale of a living car that wanted her driver for herself was a rousing read. But "Buick" is a totally different book. It is a sophisticated, if somewhat, tangential horror story, but one that holds new terrors of its own.

After his state-trooper father, Curt, is killed in a tragic car accident, young Ned Wilcox finds himself spending more and more time with the unit his dad belonged to, the Pennsylvania State Police Troop D. During his stay with the troopers, he discovers something out in the shed behind the station house. It looks like a perfectly preserved Buick Roadmaster (the Buick 8 in the book's title). But it is not.

Fascinating web

Thus begins a fascinating web of stories that King ties together. Using several different narrators—but most through Sarge Sandy Dearborn—and two different timelines, King unveils a uniquely creepy scenario around a uniquely creepy car.

In 1979, Ned's father and another trooper find a sparkling Buick abandoned at a gas station. The man who drove it, according to the attendant, just vanished. But Ned's dad notices something about the car. "That car isn't right," Curt Wilcox says, "it's like a picture in this activity book I had when I was a kid. Find 10 things wrong with this picture." He just knows, it's wrong.

They impound the car and it becomes Troop D's little secret, hidden in the shed out back. But as the years roll by, horrible things start to happen. Curt's partner and later on a prisoner go missing, and the only logical, and illogical, explanation is that the car simply ate them. Beyond the bizarre bursts of light and changes in temperature, the Buick actually seems to give birth, horrible monstrosities emerging from its trunk only to die and virtually decompose instantly in contact with the air. Curt tries obsessively to solve the Buick—find out what it is, how it works, because it sure is not a car—but is frustrated at any turn. In the meantime, troopers die, others retire but the Buick stays in the shed, under the watchful eye of Troop D.

But now, 20 years later, the Buick seems to have hatched a new plan, and only by remembering what they've forgotten can Troop D prevent another tragedy from taking place. In the final gambit, some of them will finally know what the Buick really is—and what they will find out will horrify and fascinate the reader.

"Buick" really works due to the multitude of voices and perspectives King employs. Each narrator is a bit different from the other, subtly different from one another yet all talking inexorably about the same thing. King paces "Buick" masterfully, truly keeping the novel going as if on cruise control, only to really rev up—and step on the gas—near the end of the book, which is the most satisfying King ending in recent years.

That's good because the characters themselves, while quirky, aren't really all that sympathetic, save for Dearborn. As a group, however, Troop D makes for a very textured portrait of a closely-knit group of men in uniform, coming across as authentic and admirable. But the most interesting character is the constant—the Buick, or whatever it is. The patient evil within the Buick is the heart that beats within "Buick," keeping the reader enthralled. It even has dialogue—well, sort of. It is a sly, opportunistic horror but one that will have readers looking at their own cars in a different light—or lack of it.

It is also notable that, while some of the more passive stretches in "Buick" really seem designed to help the reader snooze for a bit, other sections will really wake you up. Whenever the car opens up, King unleashes a whole plethora of new horrors with a gory gusto missing from his recent work. In a word: "yuck."

But "Buick" works not only as ecch-fest but also as a philosophical take on the nature of fear, evil and man's insatiable curiosity. Faced with the unknown, King is saying, man will simply exhaust all means to understand it—even if he can't, even if he simply shouldn't. Indeed, this isn't "Christine." This book is about more than just a scary car. Far more than that.

At the end of the ride, Stephen King's newest novel is a real horror—filled hot rod of a read, with enough power to slam readers back against the seats. Let's hope that King doesn't quit soon, because if "From a Buick 8" is any indication, the Buick Roadmaster that is Stephen King has some miles left in him yet.

Available in hardcover in National Bookstore and PowerBooks.

‘Booklatan sa Bayan’ on Panay island

By Christine Godinez-Ortega

HEAT and rain dogged my first trip to Roxas City to promote the country's regional literatures during the book fair, "Booklatan sa Bayan," at La Hacienda Hotel recently.

Unfortunately, I didn't get to see Roxas City's brass bell, said to be the biggest in Southeast Asia. Nor did I get to see the 70-foot statue of the Blessed Mother in Nagtalin Hills. What I saw were images of doilies, crocheted bedcovers in tea rose motif and the gardens of Villa Patria, where I was billeted. I also enjoyed the brewed coffee of the gracious 78-year-old hostess Josefina Altavaz Morente, the town's "Miss Emily" (without having known any "Homer Barron").

Organizer Gemma Regina C. Cunanan, the newly appointed executive director of the National Book Development Board (NBDB), had insisted on an open space to display the books instead of the air-conditioned confines of a hotel to make the fair accessible to all.

Other activities included storytelling sessions for kids by the NBDB staff, film showings, book-launchings and lectures on writing, editing and book reviews.

I came in from Iligan City via Iloilo City to join Erlinda Enriquez Panlilio who had planed in earlier from Manila.

Linda lectured on the writing of biographies and promoted her latest book, "From This Day Forward: Widows and Widowers Write," published by the Anvil Publishing House.

I was assigned to promote another Anvil publication, "Filipinos Writing: Philippine Literature from the Regions," a compilation of the multiethnic, multicultural literatures of the regions by 11 authors with Bienvenido Lumbera as general editor.

Challenging

When my turn came, I didn't realize how challenging it would be to hold my audience's attention because four feet away, high-school students were engrossed in the film, "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets." Worse, handsomely covered volumes of the "Harry Potter" books with pricey tags loomed large beside where I stood.

Lucky for me, Glenn Malimban and a host of youthful NBDB staff handed me a microphone, which, I'd like to think, helped me sell the country's regional literatures, perhaps as an alternative to imported broomstick fantasy novels.

I know the value of the imaginative work such as J.K. Rowling's "Harry Potter," but this is all about the imbalance of promotions.

At that moment, Philippine literature was up against "Harry Potter's" multimillion-dollar media campaign. Surely, there was no contest there, but I believe promoting our own literatures calls for a more concerted and sustained effort on top of the laudable policy of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) requiring colleges to offer Literature I (Philippine literature).

Still, I had to wrestle with the realization that my audience, through no fault of theirs, hadn't heard of the country's contemporary writers, much less the regional writers.

The talk culminated in an impromptu reading of Hiligaynon poetry from "Filipinos Writing." It was rewarding to see how attentive my audience was. It was obvious they were interested in becoming acquainted with the region's rich literary heritage.

Heartened

I was heartened to see as well Roxas residents of all ages flocking to the book fair despite the more spectacular activities of the city fiesta going on across the street.

On the average, daily sales at the fair was about P11,000—not bad for a non-reading public and for a first book fair ever held in the city, "an eye-opener," enthused local writer and educator Fe Gomez-Villarruz.

Instead of the 15,000 titles expected by organizers from 24 participating publishers and publishing houses, the week-long fair made available 8,000 titles consisting of trade books, self-help books, textbooks, cookbooks, coffee-table books, inspirational and health books, New Age books, encyclopedias, dictionaries, histories, biographies and colorfully illustrated children's books.

The participation of publishers was facilitated by the Book Association of the Philippines with Primetrade Asia taking care of sales and inventory.

Other than Anvil, participating publishers including the University of the Philippines Press, Bookmark, New Day, Ateneo de Manila University Press, Adarna, University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, Grolier, OMF, Word of Life and Word of Joy.

It would have been interesting to find out which books sold briskly and which ones were slow-moving because, aside from Filipinos not being readers, the reality is that they don't easily part with their hard-earned pesos for a book. It must be a tough act for publishers to produce quality books with an eye on profit to keep themselves afloat in a competitive market.

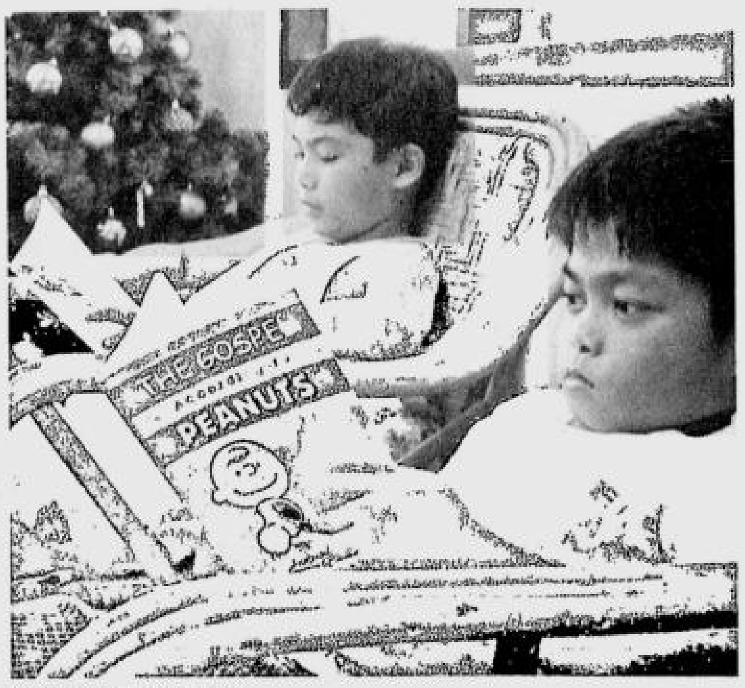
Cunanan explained that "Booklatan sa Bayan" was part of the NBDB's holistic approach to develop the country's book industry with Capiz as the pilot area.

Aside from the fair, NBDB conducted seminars on creative writing, technical and vocational skills writing, preparation of instructional materials, and publishing.

With its new chair Dennis Gonzales, and Cunanan at the helm, the NBDB has put on a fresh face, ready to implement new projects and build on what the past NBDB administration had started.

Cunanan, an educator and NGO worker, took over as NBDB executive director last August. She plans to improve the distribution of books in the country, support Filipino authorship, encourage an efficient library system and improve public libraries.

Cunanan said that Capiz was a natural choice for the first "Booklatan sa Bayan" because of the province's track record of partnership with the private sector. She believes that book development "must be part of the government agenda" but with the cooperation of all sectors of society.


THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PEANUTS

YOUNG Ilonggo readers

The furies of Salman Rushdie

In 9/11, Rushdie's hero finds a parallel to his own private demons

"Fury"
By Salman Rushdie
Modern Library
259 pages. 2002.

By Amadís Ma. Guerrero
Contributor

REVIEW

MODERN LIBRARY INTERNATIONAL EDITION
FURY
LMAN
RUSHDIE
A NOVEL
TIONAL BESTSELLER

IS NOVELIST Salman Rushdie still in hiding? There is this Fatwa (death sentence), if you will recall, handed down by the late Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran during the late 1980s, for alleged blasphemy in "The Satanic Verses."

The Fatwa has not been lifted, to my knowledge. So Rushdie must still be officially underground. But this has not affected his writing ability and productivity. In recent years, he has discreetly appeared in some literary functions. And he even had a walk-on role in the movie "The Diary of Bridget Jones," appearing as himself.

Rushdie has also crossed the Atlantic, been to the United States and is intimately acquainted with New York, going by this latest novel.

"Fury" is succinctly but aptly named. It is the story of Indian professor Malik Solanka, 51, a "retired historian of ideas" whose life, on the surface, is an enviable one. He is married to a loving Englishwoman, Eleanor Master, and they have a 3-year-old son, Asmaan, who adores his father.

Solanka has decided to quit "the world of thought," Thatcher conservatism, "fat-cat cronies" and the English academe, which he finds "provincial."

And so, because he is an artist at heart, he designs a hi-tech doll—bitchily called Little Brain—which, to his surprise, turns out to be a worldwide best-seller. The creation is the basis for a hit TV show ("The Adventures of Little Brain"). And the actress or model inside the doll—she is actually supposed to be smart—becomes a super-celebrity.

Murderous heart

Solanka himself grows rich. But there is murder in his heart (the root cause of which lies buried in his Bombay childhood). To avoid committing a crime, Solanka abandons his family and flees to New York, believing he will find his salvation there.

The professor-turned-dollmaker feels "a tiredness of the soul." He has memory blackouts, and behaves scandalously without being aware of it. He clearly needs a psychiatrist—in a country where psychiatry flourishes—but he refuses. Besides, that is not what the novel is leading up to.

It is the year 2000. America is at the height of its power, as Rushdie interprets it. The author takes a good, hard look at the US through its most vibrant city, New York (it "boiled with money"). There is no hint of the catastrophe that would hit New York on Sept. 11 the following year.

In the energy—or fury—of the city, Solanka, as he becomes involved with people of various nationalities despite his desire for solitude, finds a parallel to his own private demons:

"Everywhere you looked, the professor thought, there was fury in the air. Everywhere you listened there was the beating of the dark goddess' wings."

There was too much chatter, too much diagnosis and new consciousness "...and the language of the heart was being lost." And "the Furies hovered over Malik Solanka, New York and America, and shrieked."

The master writer has not lost his touch, Fatwa and all. His wicked wit is in almost every page, and he remains as eloquent as ever. "Fury" is shorter than Rushdie's two previous novels ("The Moor's Last Sigh" and "The Ground Beneath Her Feet") but just as dazzling, and more controlled.

Drug firm adopts public school

By Alfredo P. Hernandez
Contributor

THE FOUNDATION for Worldwide People Power (FWWPP) was surprised to receive a call from Gonzalo Ongpin, human resource manager of Lilly Philippines, a pharmaceutical company, expressing support for the Education Revolution.

Before that, Ongpin and HR director Jose Rex Beton had already been talking to the Department of Education (DepEd) about assisting a public school.

DepEd National Capital Region chief Gerardo Consolacion and regional director Dr. Corazon Santiago arranged for them to meet with the school officials of Ilugin Elementary School, a five-story building in San Sebastian Street, Pinagbuhatan, Pasig, with 33 teachers and 1,336 students from grades 1 to 6.

Beton and Ongpin now wants the FWWPP to help them develop a comprehensive adoption program for Ilugin Elementary School.

The four-point two-year program focuses on improving literacy through reading programs, promoting proper hygiene practices, boosting computer literacy and implementing a scholarship program for deserving but cash-strapped students.

Last Dec. 20, Lilly Philippines president and general manager Carlos B. Raymond Jr. formally transferred the newly built Lilly Learning Center to principal Nelia Castillo. It marked the start of a long-term partnership between Lilly and Ilugin Elementary School.

Guests during the event were DepEd assistant schools division superintendent Dr. Florentina R. Lizano and Iluminada Seno, coordinating principal for DepEd District 1; Lilly Philippines sales director Jessin R. Soriano, assistant director for corporate affairs Jiji Concepcion and Dr. Noni Alvero.

The Lilly Learning Center is on the second floor of the Ilugin Elementary School. It has six Pentium III multimedia computers with special software for improving reading and English proficiency, a big-screen television, an integrated sound system, tables and chairs, and children's books and magazines.

Family farm schools

Pampamilyang Paaralang Agrikultura Inc. (PPAI) OIC Jarvis Leonard DJ Jaurilla has asked FWWPP for assistance in promoting their Family Farm Schools (FFS) project.

The FFS aims to set up schools that will show the rural youth that farming can be financially rewarding. It also organizes farmers' associations to provide assistance to adult learners through livelihood training and seminars.

The PPAI has already set up family farm schools in Barrio Dagatan, Lipa City; Bo. Libo-o, Dingle, Iloilo; Bo. Talon, Tuy, Batangas; Bo. San Aquilino, Roxas, Mindoro Oriental; Sitio Sab-ahan, Bo. Cantugot, Bais City, Negros Oriental; and Bo. Maquina, Balete, Batangas.

Appeal from Negros Oriental

Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman has called the FWWPP's attention to the plight of the Dauin Municipal High School, the Basiai Elementary School and the Apo Island Elementary School, all in Dauin, a fifth-class municipality about an hour away from Dumaguete City.

Secretary Soliman said the children and youth in Dauin were adversely affected by the local schools' lack of educational tools and facilities.

In need of classrooms

Math teacher Rogelio I. Abrasado says his school, the Baras National High School in Sto. Nino, Samar, is in dire need of classrooms. The rooms they are using now have floor areas of only 30 sq m, thus, falling short of the minimum requirement for instructional space. They are also very poorly ventilated.

School needs tents

Principal Bayani Paz says Maybangcal Elementary School needs three tents for its boy scouts who will attend the 2003 Boy Scout of the Philippines Regional Jamboree Jan. 29-Feb. 3 in Abuyod, Teresa, Rizal.

If you have a serviceable camping tent to spare, please send it to the FWWPP at 101 Cedar Mansions II, J. Escriva Drive, Ortigas Center, Pasig City, or call us at 631-4970 if you want us to pick it up.

LILLY Philippines president Carlos Raymond Jr. turns over donation to Pasig school officials.

BRIGHT faces of young public school beneficiaries

LILLY and Pasig officials inaugurate Lilly Learning Center.

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Rosa Rosal

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Raquepo at West, Saavedra at Boston

VISUAL ARTS

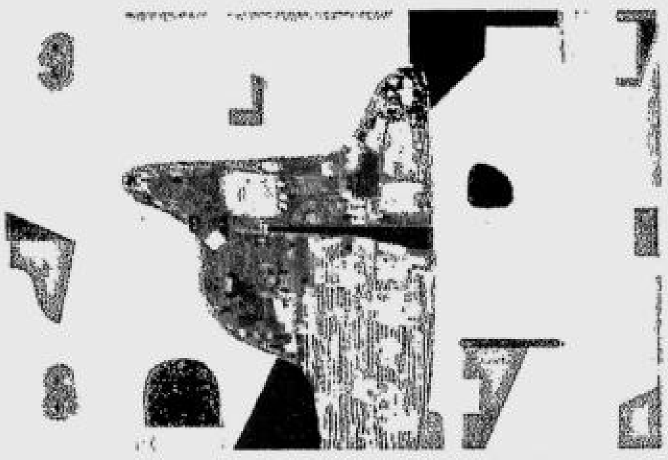
JUCAR Raquepo mounts his fifth solo show, "Download Funshapes," at the West Gallery, 3/L Glorietta 4, Makati, Jan. 9-21.

A Shell and Metrobank Art Competition finalist, Raquepo has shown versatility in depicting landscapes, still-life, ancestral houses, moths, butterflies, foliage and abstract-conceptual themes.

He has managed to emphasize an unsparing use of color, from his expansive skies to the detailed paint dabs of his still-life and the vivid hues of his abstract paintings.

A graduate of the UP College of Fine Arts, Raquepo has held three solo exhibitions and several group shows.

Call 752-7028 to 29.



"FOR THE Pinball Wizard," oil on canvas, by Jucar Raquepo at West

EPIFANIO "Panyong" Atencia holds a solo exhibit at the Hodgepodge, 224 Pilar St., Mandaluyong City. Atencia's "Guhit Musika" features large paintings in acrylic on canvas.

Atencia's studio-gallery is at 150 Katipunan Road, St. Ignatius, QC, where he and his wife Mercy also have a frame shop and restaurant-grill.

"GEMINI," an exhibit of watercolors by young artist Carlo Saavedra, will be the inaugural show of the Boston Gallery Alcove, the Gallery's new exhibition space for works on paper.

Inaugural ceremonies and exhibition opening will be held 6 p.m. on Jan. 11. The exhibit runs until Feb. 12. Boston Gallery is at 72-A Boston Street, Cubao, QC. Call 722-9205.

THE "ANG Bayan Kong Pilipino 2" art exhibit opened recently at the Galeria de las Islas (3/F Silahis Center 744, Gen. Luna St., Intramuros, Manila).

Featured artists Epifanio Atencia, Cid Cioma, Joel Cristobal, Leo Meneses, Carlos Pagalunan, Ramon Piguing and Celso Pepito, members of the Kabuhayan Artists Cooperative, formally opened the show. They were joined by Gamaliel Fulgueras, Jossie Abella, Milagros Faustino and Milagros Lane, manager of the gallery.

The exhibit will run until Jan. 11. Call 527-2113.

THREE of the country's foremost artists are holding an exhibit at Finale LaO until Jan. 10. The artists are Ben Francisco, Agustin Goy and Romulo Olazo. Finale Art File is on the 4/F LaO Center, corner Pasay Road and Makati Avenue.

ONGOING on the lobby of Herald Suites on Chito Roces Avenue, Makati, is Tito Roy's exhibit of acrylic paintings. "Buhay Pinoy" will run until Jan. 17.

ART of Light photographer Genie Arambulo won the Overall Best Picture of the Year award in the recent Delphi 2002 convention at the Grand Couptorne Waterfront Hotel in Singapore.

Members of the Master Photographers Association (MPA) from all over Asia participated in the convention.

Arambulo, a new MPA member, received four other major awards in the Delphi 2002 convention.

The photographers winning entries are "Fog" (Best Portrait and Overall Best Picture of the Year) and "Synchronized" (Digital Print Merit). She also received the first and second place in Commercial and Industrial Print for "Cherry" and "Tacos," respectively.

EUGENE Stuart del Rosario presents "Versatility," a painting exhibition sponsored by the Rotary Club of New Manila East of Rotary International District 3780.

Del Rosario won in the International Art Competition sponsored by Saudia Airlines. He received the Bagong Bayani Award from the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration.

VALERIA Cavestany returns to The Tivoli restaurant of Mandarin Oriental, Manila on Jan. 9 to Feb. 16 in an exhibition dubbed "After the Flowers." The exhibit is mounted by the Rotary Club of Makati West. The exhibition will benefit the Chosen Children Village Foundation.

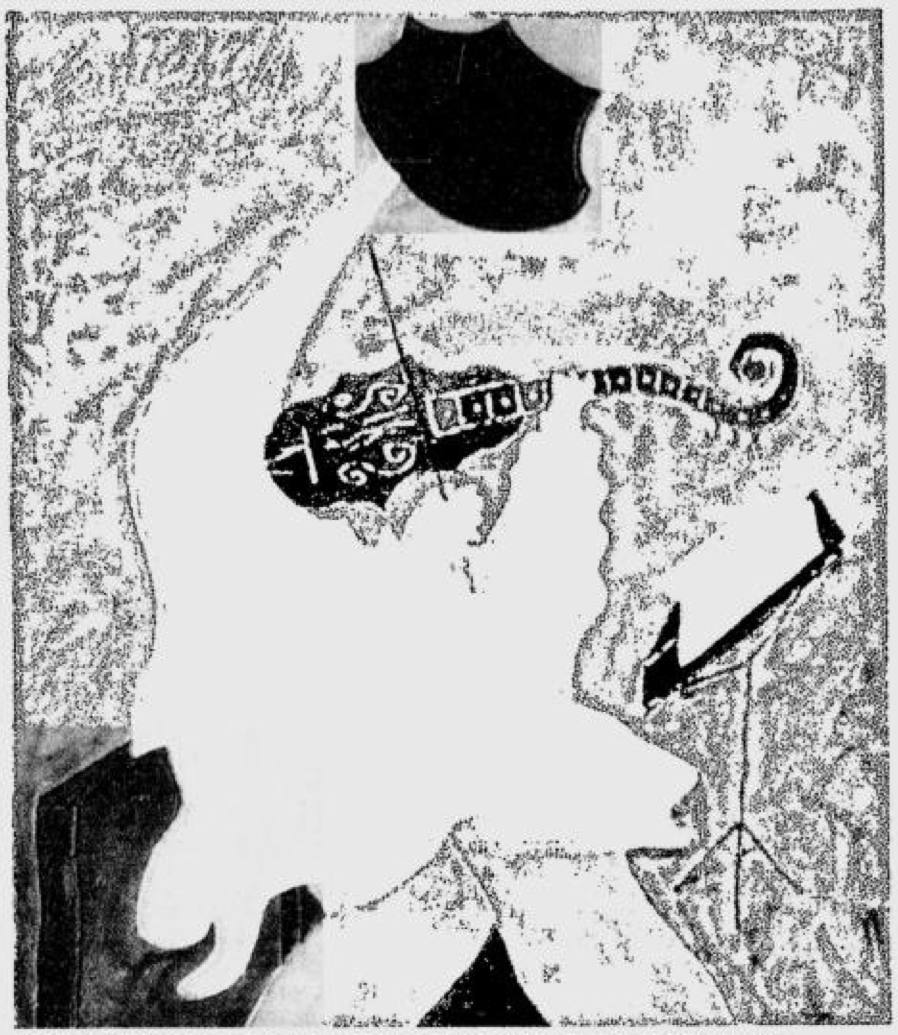
YASMIN Sison holds "Interior Domain" at Finale Art Gallery, SM Megamall, Jan.7-22. The exhibit consists of paintings of women in interior settings.

AQUARELLE, a 15-member group of watercolor painters headed by Rolando Santos, held an on-the-spot portrait session with singer Anna Fegi on Jan. 4 at the Marikina Riverbanks.

Aside from Santos, the Aquarelle group is composed of Andy Urag, Isagani Fuentes, Nick Masangkay, Nick Paz, Nards Go, Rhoel Rille, Rodgie Gapayao, Tess Tarnate, Nanette Amorado, Rusty Gregorio, Ren Maglalang. Honorary members include Al Perez, Jess Garcia and Paul Escobanas.

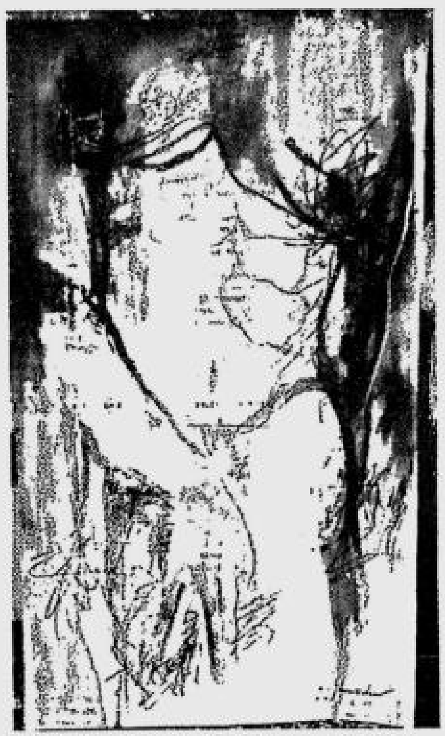
ONGOING at The Sanctuary Gallery in Baguio City is the exhibition Lamps and Stoneware by Babu Conde and Jeff van den Broeck. Show runs until Jan. 26.

The Sanctuary Gallery is located at Maryknoll, Campo Sioco, Baguio City. Call (074) 442-4602 or 442-4926 or e-mail era@bgo.csi.com.ph.

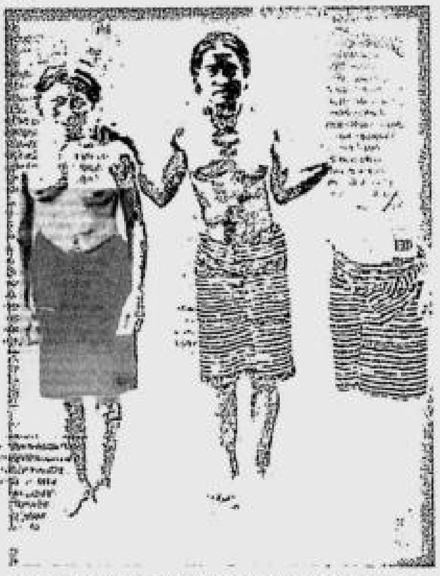


"PAGPUPUNYAGI," acrylic and mixed media, by Panyong Atencia at Hodgepodge

"LAMPS & STONEWARE" exhibit is ongoing until Jan. 26 at The Sanctuary Gallery, Maryknoll, Camp Sioco, Baguio City. The sculpted wood and *almaciga* resin lamp (above) is by Babu Conde.



"UNTITLED" by Carlo Saavedra at Boston



BENJAMIN Dayrit Elayda III will hold a solo show at the Big & Small Art Co., on Jan. 9-20. Call 374-2437. Above is "Good Only as Commodity."

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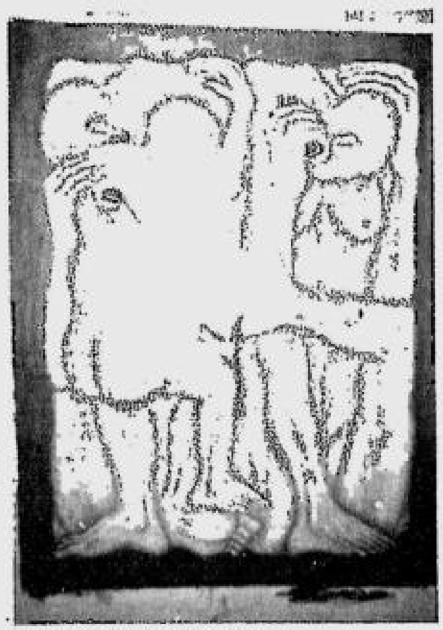
Exhibit to raise funds for kids of death-row parents

"PAGTATAGPO," a fund-raising exhibition, brings together the works of 50 Filipino visual artists at the RCBC Building Galleria, Jan. 13-27.

The exhibit aims to create a trust fund for poor children with parents in death row.

"Pagtatagpo" features Joel Ajero, Salvador Alonday, Elmer Borlongan, Arnel Brilliantes, Benjie Cabangis, Calcetas, Rara Carillo, Jonathan Castro, Bing Chanco, Dansoy Coquina, Virginia Dandan, Grade de Jesus, Reynold de la Cruz, Simkin De Pio, Norman Dreo, Romuto Galicano, Daniloo Garcia, Emmanuel Garibay, Sandra Gfeller, Riel Hilario, Geraldine Javier, Antonio Leano, Erwin leano, Nina Libatique, Primo Libatique, Joseph Lofranco, Jerome Malic, Neil Manato, Jim Orencio, Anthony Palomo, Mario Partial, Mike Parial, Samuel Penaso, Elmer Roslin, Ronaldo Ruiz, Jerson Samson, Jose Santos III, Victor Santos, Fernando Sena, Lino Severino, Federico Sievert, Norman Sustiguer, Teya Tan, Dominador Tawagon, Juanito Torres, Wire Tuazon, Clairelynn Uy, Francisco Verano, Philip Victor, Pamela Yan and Nadi Xavier.

Call 927-4033 or (0916) 578-7371.



"UNTITLED," by Sam Penaso